



# **Interim Evaluation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)**

Final Report to the Directorate-General  
for Education and Culture of  
the European Commission



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# Glossary

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ACVT	Advisory Committee on Vocational Training
ANQEP	Agência Nacional para a Qualificação (Portugal)
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
BFUG	Bologna Follow-up Group
BIS	Department for Business Innovation and Skills (UK)
BMUKK	Ministry of Education and Culture (Austria)
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CIDREE	Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe
CoR	Committee of the Regions
Coreper	Permanent Representatives Committee
CRELL	Centre for Research on Education and Lifelong Learning
CSR	Country-Specific Recommendations under Europe 2020
C-VET	Career-oriented continuing VET
CVT	Continuous Vocational Training
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture
DG ECFIN	Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs
DG EMPL	Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG HOME	Directorate General for Home Affairs
DG SANCO	Directorate General for Health and Consumers
DGVT	Directors General for Vocational Training
DS	Diploma Supplement
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECOFIN	Economic and Financial Affairs Council
ECTS	European Credit Transfers Scheme
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EFVET	European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EMCO	Employment Committee
ENIC- NARIC	European - National Recognition Information Centres
ENQA	European Quality Assurance Network for Higher Education
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
EPSCO	Employment and Social Affairs Council
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ERA	European Research Area
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESCO	European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations taxonomy
ESF	European Social Fund
ESG (QA)	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESL	Early School Leaving
ESU	European Students Union
ET	Education and Training
ETF	European Training Foundation
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
ETUCE	European Trade Union Committee for Education

EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
EUCIS-LLL	European Civil Society Platform on Life-Long Learning
EUfolio	EU Classroom ePortfolios
EUN	European Schoolnet
EUNEC	European Network of Education Councils
EUpVET	European Providers of Vocational Education
Eurostat	The Statistical Office of the European Communities
EURYDICE	Education Information Network in the European Community
EVTA	European Vocational Training Association
FE	Further Education
FP7	7 <sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HLG	High-Level Group(s)
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LMS	Learner Management Systems
LRC	Lisbon Recognition Convention
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
NESET	Network of Experts on Social Aspects of Education and Training
NESSE	Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OER	Open Educational Resources
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences (OECD)
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey (IEA)
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD)
PLA	Peer Learning Activity
SG	Steering Group in the ET 2020 OMC process
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TNE	Transnational education
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWG	ET 2020 Thematic Working Group (to 2013)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WG	ET 2020 Working Group (2013-2015)
YEP	Youth Employment Package

## Country Acronyms

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
UK	United Kingdom

# 1.0 Introduction

This Final Report presents the findings of the interim evaluation of ET 2020 which was commissioned by DG EAC and undertaken by Ecorys.

## 1.1 Aims of the Interim Evaluation of ET 2020

The interim evaluation is an important element of a wider ET 2020 stocktaking exercise being led by DG EAC, in close cooperation with the Member States. In its conclusions of 24 February 2014, the Education Council contextualized the ET 2020 stocktaking by underlining the need to increase the added value and optimise the effectiveness of the ET 2020 strategic framework, and its underlying governance and working arrangements, notably by *“using the mid-term stocktaking exercise to help prepare the next draft Joint Report, with a more forward-looking focus which identifies key priority areas and concrete issues for future work”*.<sup>1</sup>

The interim evaluation will support the stocktaking exercise by reviewing and improving the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of ET 2020 in order to both optimise and prioritise the achievements of concrete and Europe 2020 relevant deliverables for the next work cycle and support the development of governance process, working methods and instruments attached to ET 2020. The table below sets out the main evaluation questions and sub-questions for the interim evaluation.

**Table 1.1 Interim Evaluation of ET 2020: Key Evaluation Questions**

Evaluation Question	Sub-questions
<b>EQ 1 RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE OF ET 2020 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND EVOLVING PRIORITY AREAS IN LIGHT OF Europe 2020</b>	To what extent are ET 2020 strategic objectives and priority areas (2009-2011 and 2012-2014) relevant and coherent with the needs of: (a) Europe 2020 (incl. the content of the CSRs); (b) The Youth Employment Package (incl. the Youth Guarantee); and (c) The European sectorial policy agendas for schools, VET, adult learning, higher education, and relevant transversal questions (entrepreneurship, ICT and multilingualism)
<b>EQ 2 OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF ET 2020</b>	To what extent have the objectives of ET 2020 been achieved at the European and national level, thus fostering the modernisation of the education and training systems of the Member States?  How much do the main achievements (i.e. concrete outputs, initial results, longer-term impacts) correspond to the ET 2020 objectives?
<b>EQ 3 EVALUATION OF THE ET 2020 GOVERNANCE METHODS AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS WITH A VIEW TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF Europe 2020 PRIORITIES – AT BOTH THE EU AND MEMBER STATE LEVEL</b>	To what extent have ET 2020's governance methods and policy instruments been relevant to, effective and efficient in the implementation of the Europe 2020 priorities (including the implementation of the CSRs)?  What is the overall added value resulting from ET 2020 policy cooperation and from the instruments/measures?
<b>EQ 4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ET 2020, THE LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME/ERASMUS+, THE ESIF AND OTHER FUNDING PROGRAMMES</b>	To what extent are the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and other EU's funding programmes (such as the 7th Framework Programme/Horizon 2020) relevant and coherent, effective and efficient sources of financing for the Member States that are implementing ET 2020 reforms in line with the Europe 2020 agenda?

<sup>1</sup> Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council, Conclusions on efficient and innovative education and training to invest in skills - supporting the 2014 European Semester (Brussels, 24 February 2014), [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/141138.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/141138.pdf)



## 1.2 Background to ET 2020

This sub-section provides an explanation and background to ET 2020, noting what ET 2020 aims to achieve, how it aims to achieve its objectives, and also the expectations of ET 2020 in terms of supporting Member States in reforming and modernising education and training systems.

The main aim of the ET 2020 framework is to support Member States in further developing their educational and training systems. It provides common strategic objectives for Member States, including a set of principles for achieving these objectives, as well as common working methods with priority areas for each periodic work cycle. The ET 2020 strategic framework is focussed on lifelong learning, which covers both formal and non-formal learning. It supports European cooperation across all sectors of education: from early childhood education through to schools, higher education, vocational education and adult learning.

The ET 2020 strategic framework encourages Member States to develop their education and training systems to become more effective and efficient.

ET 2020 is based on a Council Conclusion of 2009.<sup>2</sup> This is a political text. ET 2020 does not have a specific basis in EU secondary law. Under ET 2020 a number of policy instruments, working methods and principles have been used. Because a wide variety of actors is involved in ET 2020 we give a schematic presentation of the main bodies. Since the overarching Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs was launched in 2010, the relationship between ET 2020 and Europe 2020 has become increasingly important. To further illustrate the intended working of ET 2020, the intervention logic is presented at the end of this section.

### 1.2.1 Legal background to ET 2020

European Union's activities in the field of education and training are based on various legal provisions. Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU)<sup>3</sup> of the EU states overall aims include *"the well-being of its peoples", "balanced economic growth", and "a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress"*. In addition, the Union shall – among other objectives – *"promote scientific and technological advance", "combat social exclusion and discrimination", promote "protection of the rights of the child" and "respect its [the EU's] rich cultural and linguistic diversity"*.<sup>4</sup>

EU competence in the area of education has existed since the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992. European Union institutions play a supporting role. Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) specifies that:

*"The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity ..."*

More specifically, Union action in the area of education aims at:

- Developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States;
- Encouraging mobility of students and teachers, by encouraging inter alia, the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study;
- Promoting cooperation between educational establishments;
- Developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States;

<sup>2</sup> Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) [Official Journal C 119 of 28.5.2009].

<sup>3</sup> <http://old.eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:326:0001:01:EN:HTML>

<sup>4</sup> <http://old.eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:326:0001:01:EN:HTML>

- Encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe; and
- Encouraging the development of distance education.

Both in the areas of education and training, EU competence is limited *“to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States, without thereby superseding their competence in these areas”*. Legally binding acts of the Union in education and vocational training *“may not entail harmonisation of Member States’ laws or regulations”* (Art. 2 and 6, TFEU).

To understand the sectoral differences in the working of the OMC under ET 2020, it is important to highlight that European competence in the field of vocational training has a much longer tradition. It was recognized already in the Treaty of Rome of 1957 establishing the European Economic Community. At present, Article 166 TFEU stipulates that *“The Union shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training”*.

More specifically, Union action in the field of vocational training aims to:

- Facilitate adaptation to industrial changes, in particular through vocational training and retraining;
- Improve initial and continuing vocational training in order to facilitate vocational integration and reintegration into the labour market;
- Facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people;
- Stimulate cooperation on training between educational or training establishments and firms; and
- Develop exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the training systems of the Member States.

Highlighting the significance attached to education and training at the European level, it must also be noted that the Treaty of Lisbon has given education and training a cross-cutting, horizontal importance. This is expressed in Art. 9 TFEU, which specifies that, in defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to *“a high level of education [and] training”*.

### 1.2.2 ET 2020 Structure

Since 2000, conscious of the importance of Education and Training for their economic and social objectives, EU Member States have begun working together to achieve a set of 13 specific goals in the field of Education.<sup>5</sup> This was referred to as the Education and Training 2010 programme. By sharing examples of good policy practice, by taking part in Peer Learning activities (PLA), by setting benchmarks and by tracking progress against key indicators, Member States aimed to respond coherently to common challenges, whilst retaining their individual sovereignty in the field of Education policy. Although ET 2010 was never formally or externally evaluated, the Council concluded that there was a need for continued cooperation after 2010, as highlighted in the text of the Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009:

*“Starting in December 2008 a Commission Communication presents the plans for an updated ‘strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training’. The direct linkage of education and training to the ‘growth and jobs’ agenda is evident, as is the emphasis on ‘cooperation’ through the Open Method of Coordination. The Communication notes the difficult balance that occurs when focusing on shorter term ‘jobs and growth’ priorities advising that the “current focus on the economic crisis must not divert attention from setting the right long-term, strategic education and training policies”.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For earlier European-level activities on education and training, see *The history of European cooperation in education and training* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528%2801%29:EN:NOT>

According to the Council Conclusions, there is general agreement that cooperation has proved useful in the past, and that significant progress was made in the previous years. The earlier cooperation aimed primarily at supporting the improvement of national education and training systems, through the development of complementary EU-level tools, mutual learning and the exchange of good practice via the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The closest description of 'needs and problems' in this document is that education and training "have a crucial role to play in meeting the many socio-economic, demographic, environmental and technological challenges facing Europe and its citizens today and in the years ahead". A problem analysis or an intervention logic for justifying ET 2020 is not presented.

The ET 2020 Council Conclusions of 2009 held that European cooperation in education and training should be implemented making effective use of the Open Method of Coordination and developing synergies between the different education and training sectors.

In this context, a number of principles have been established to help meet four strategic objectives that are supported by common working methods (see paragraph 1.2.3). Specifically, the four ET 2020 strategic objectives are as shown in the box below:

#### **ET 2020 strategic objectives<sup>7</sup>**

***"Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality:*** Increasingly challenging economic and social circumstances demand the introduction of comprehensive lifelong learning strategies. In particular, work is needed to ensure the development of national qualifications frameworks based on relevant learning outcomes with the link being made to the European Qualifications Framework. More flexible learning pathways are required including strengthened mechanisms to ensure better transition between various formal and informal education and training sectors. Further efforts are required to promote adult learning, to increase the quality of guidance systems, and to make learning more attractive in general such as through the use of new technologies. To enhance employability, the importance of mobility for learners, teachers and teacher trainers should be gradually expanded with a view to making periods of learning abroad the norm. In doing so, the European Quality Charter for Mobility should be applied.

***Improving the Quality and Efficiency of Education and Training:*** Effective, efficient and equal education systems are crucial to developing employability across all groups. At the same time, excellence and attractiveness of education institutions should be maintained. To achieve this, key competencies need to be acquired at all levels of education. This includes raising standards in basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, making science courses more attractive and strengthening linguistic capabilities. In this context, higher quality teaching and better teacher training are required. It is also important to improve leadership in education and training institutions with the support of effective quality assurance systems. Evidence-based policy-making is critical to strengthening practice in education and training.

***Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship:*** Education and training policy should enable all citizens to develop key competencies, enhance their employability and encourage their active citizenship. Educational disadvantage should be addressed through high quality, inclusive, and early education. Education and training systems should aim to ensure that all learners including those from disadvantaged background complete their education. In doing so, education provision should be provided on a more tailored basis. Education should promote intercultural competences, democratic values, respect for fundamental rights and the environment and combat all forms of discrimination.

***Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training:*** Creativity and innovation are crucial to sustainable economic development and competitiveness. This relies upon the equal acquisition of key competences such as digital skills, the ability to learn, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness. Moreover, strong partnership is required between education, research and innovation policies, institutions, business and civil society. This will assist in strengthening skills and competences in the labour market and creating a climate conducive to creativity and addressing social needs".

<sup>7</sup> [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/education\\_training\\_youth/general\\_framework/ef0016\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/general_framework/ef0016_en.htm)

The Council wanted a strategic framework that would remain flexible enough to respond to new challenges and could therefore be regularly adapted. This is the reason for ET 2020's 3-year work cycles with Joint Reports (adopted by Council and Commission) as a basis for establishing fresh priority areas for the ensuing cycle. A first set of priority areas was determined for the period 2009-2011 (in the initial ET 2020 Council Conclusions). The 2012 Joint Report replaced the original list of mid-term priority areas by a new one (for the yet unfinished period 2012-2014) that was geared to mobilise education and training to support growth and jobs. One of the components of the ET 2020 Joint Report of 2015 will be the identification of a third set of ET 2020 priority areas (2015-2017).

As a means of monitoring progress and identifying challenges, as well as contributing to evidence-based policy making, a series of reference levels of European average performance ('European benchmarks') were established to support the ET 2020 strategic objectives. These benchmarks should not be considered as concrete targets for individual countries to reach by 2020. Rather, Member States are invited to consider, on the basis of national priorities and whilst taking account of changing economic circumstances, how and to what extent they can contribute to the collective achievement of the European benchmarks through national actions.

On the overall design of the ET 2020 OMC, it must be noticed from the outset that the strategic objectives appear as all-encompassing statements on what is aspired to in respect to education and training, but do not lead to a systematic operationalization, are not systematically linked to indicators and benchmarks, and are not subject of a systematic reporting. In contrast to what could be expected in an OMC, the ET 2020 indicators and benchmarks lead a life on their own (with their own annual Monitor), but cannot serve as a tool to monitor direct progress in the achievement of the strategic objectives.

Whilst Member States have agreed to the objectives at Council level, how and when they implement them is up to each Member State. However, in some cases objectives have been given greater weight such as through the agreement at political level of targets and benchmarks, which, as the evaluation will show, have given considerable impetus to implementation.

To help Member States, the Open Method of Coordination (described in the next section) is used which supports countries to come together to discuss topics, share experiences and good practices. The intention is then that Member States apply their learning within their own countries. The extent to which this happens is, as we shall see, extremely variable and depends on a range of factors, the precise configuration of which varies from country to country.

Many steps must be taken before real change in the classrooms of Europe take place. And many factors determine whether participation of Members States in the OMC (typically in Brussels), leads to the implementation of new or improved policies and practices 'at home'. In short, to deliver results 'on the ground', ET 2020 relies on causal chains which are complex and highly variable and it needs to be recognised that much of the OMC process relies on 'softer' instruments to inform and shape policy and practice on the ground.

### 1.2.3 ET 2020 Working Methods

To achieve the four strategic objectives, ET 2020 key principles were established<sup>8</sup>. To begin with, European cooperation in education and training should make effective use of the Open Method of Coordination. The OMC is a form of voluntary intergovernmental cooperation between Member States, involving the establishment of common objectives, priorities and benchmarks, regular monitoring and reporting, development and sharing of policy-relevant evidence, networking and exchange of best practice.

<sup>8</sup> Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) [Official Journal C 119 of 28.5.2009].

Through this voluntary cooperation between Member States, which is facilitated by a range of instruments (see paragraph 1.2.4), it is expected that Member States will initiate and implement policy reforms. These should ultimately lead to positive changes, such as the modernisation of education and training systems, improved employability of European citizens, and reaching the overall Europe 2020 targets.

The OMC under ET 2020 takes into account: (i) the four strategic objectives for European cooperation; (ii) common reference tools and approaches; (iii) peer learning and the exchange of good practice; (iv) periodic monitoring and reporting; (v) evidence and data from all relevant European agencies and networks and international organisations; and (vi) the opportunities available under Community programmes, particularly in the field of lifelong learning. The other summarised principles include:

- European cooperation in education and training should be pertinent and concrete, and produce clear and visible outcomes;
- The aims and priorities of the Copenhagen process, in the field of Vocational Education and Training, should contribute to achieving the strategic objectives;
- Efforts within the EU to modernise higher education, should be achieved through synergies with the intergovernmental Bologna process, which seeks to develop a European Higher Education Area across (currently) 47 participating countries and where the European Commission is a full member;
- Where relevant, cross-sectoral cooperation should be sought between EU initiatives in education and training and those in related policy areas;
- Well-functioning cooperation is needed between stakeholders who have a considerable contribution to make in terms of policy making;
- Policy dialogue with countries outside the EU of EEA and cooperation with international organisations should be reinforced, thereby providing a source of fresh ideas and comparison; and
- Where appropriate, financial resources from the European Structural Funds may be used to enhance education and training systems in accordance with the overall strategic objectives.

In this context, it is important to note that ET 2020 does not have a budget of its own. ET 2020 priorities should therefore be reflected in projects and programmes supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013) and its successor Erasmus+ (2014-2020), the 7th Research Framework Programme (2007-2013) and its successor Horizon 2020 (2014-2020), and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF in the current and coming period).

#### 1.2.4 Instruments of ET 2020

The OMC 'toolbox' is based (among others) on identifying and defining shared objectives at European level, jointly specified means of measurement (indicators, benchmarks) and comparative tools for cooperation. This should contribute to mutual improvement of systems by the dissemination of good practice, peer review and pilot projects.

Since the Council Conclusions gave flexibility in developing the OMC, a range of activities can be distinguished. For the sake of simplicity, a typology of the Education and Training OMC is described as follows (based on a combination of the Council Conclusion and an inventory by DG EAC):

- 1 **Policy steering instruments** that are **formally adopted** by the EU institutions
  - a. The European Parliament and the Council can adopt Incentive Measures;
  - b. The Council, on a proposal from the Commission, can adopt Recommendations. In addition, the Council frequently adopts political declarations in the form of Conclusions (and sometimes of Resolutions), on proposal of the Commission; and
  - c. The Commission guides the Council's decision-making process through its right to submit Communications that are the basis for Council Conclusions. Communications are often accompanied by Staff Working Documents that provide a more detailed insight in policy issues.



## 2 **Policy steering instruments** that are not formally adopted by the EU institutions

- a. Joint declarations between EU institutions and stakeholders. The joint declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships an example of an innovative policy steering instrument, signed by the European Commission, the EU Council Presidency and the cross-sectorial European social partners. It commonly commits the signatories to a number of principles and actions to strengthen the access to, supply, quality and attractiveness of apprenticeships. Furthermore, businesses, social partners, chambers, VET providers, sectorial organisations, youth organisations and other relevant actors are invited to make pledges;
- b. Reports by High Level expert groups. Reports issued by High Level Groups (for example, those on Literacy and on the Modernisation of Higher Education) are not subject to a formal process of approval by the EU institutions, but carry weight because of the prominence and expertise of the members; and
- c. Policy steering conclusions following stakeholder fora. The annual European Education, Training and Youth Forum leads to conclusions that are presented to the Council. Similarly, conclusions may be produced following other stakeholder meetings such as the annual University-Business Forum.

## 3 Specific guidance for Member State reform

- a. Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) under the European Semester are the most prominent EU-instrument providing guidance to specific Member States. To assist Member States in implementing the challenges identified in the CSRs, the ET 2020 framework provides for the;
- b. Annual ET 2020 Peer Review, introduced by the 2012 Joint Report and aiming to focus on key policy issues emerging during the European Semester that give rise to a large number of CSRs;
- c. In-depth country workshops (including peer learning activities and peer reviews) organised by ET 2020 Thematic Working Groups (now ET 2020 Working Groups) and generally resulting in guidance for the host and/or the participating countries;
- d. In addition, Thematic Working Groups have produced outputs in the form of compendia of good practices, policy handbooks and guidance frameworks that are aimed to assist the reform process of the Member States.

## 4 **Peer learning and the exchange of good practice.** Mutual learning takes place through peer-learning activities, conferences and seminars, high-level forums, experts groups, panels, studies and analyses, involving the relevant stakeholders. Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) were one of the key instruments, but the OMC also includes groups/networks implementing legal instruments, sectoral working groups, stakeholder involvement, experts Groups and a range of peer learning activities (PLAs). Outputs can take the form of overviews of policy measures and examples of good practices (e.g. inventory of good practices), analytical papers, guidelines, and handbooks for policy implementation.

## 5 **Benchmarking, periodic evidence monitoring and reporting.** The Commission's *Education and Training Monitor* and other statistical and analytical reports are based on data as provided by Eurostat, OECD and likewise. This information base provides an insight in the evolution of the Member States and Candidate Countries with respect to the ET 2020 benchmarks and indicators.

- 6 **Evidence and data** from all relevant European agencies / networks and international organisations:
- Research, data collection and/or analysis is carried out by CEDEFOP, ETF, Eurydice, CRELL, EENEE/NESET and the FP7 programme on Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH); and
  - In addition, a number of especially commissioned studies provide the ET 2020 with evidence-based research as a foundation for policy development.
- 7 **Funding Programme work instruments.** Since 2014, the Erasmus+ Programme (and the Lifelong Learning Programme - LLP - between 2007 and 2013) supports the OMC through projects and partnerships that foster cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices and through support for policy reform. The Commission sets the annual work programme, including the annual priorities for the selection of projects, and adopt the lists of selected projects.
- 8 **Common reference tools** and approaches, tools fostering transparency and recognition of qualifications, experiences and skills throughout the EU;
- Particular tools: The European Framework of Key Competences, The European Qualification Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), The European Quality Assurance Reference framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the Diploma Supplement (DS), and Europass; and
  - Guidance tools: The National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC), PLOTEUS portal, and the Euroguidance network.

The extent of the potential 'reach' of ET 2020 could indicate that it in principle involves every action/programme under education and training across the European Commission and beyond (e.g. how they contribute to the strategic framework that is ET 2020).

### 1.2.5 Bodies and beneficiaries involved in ET 2020

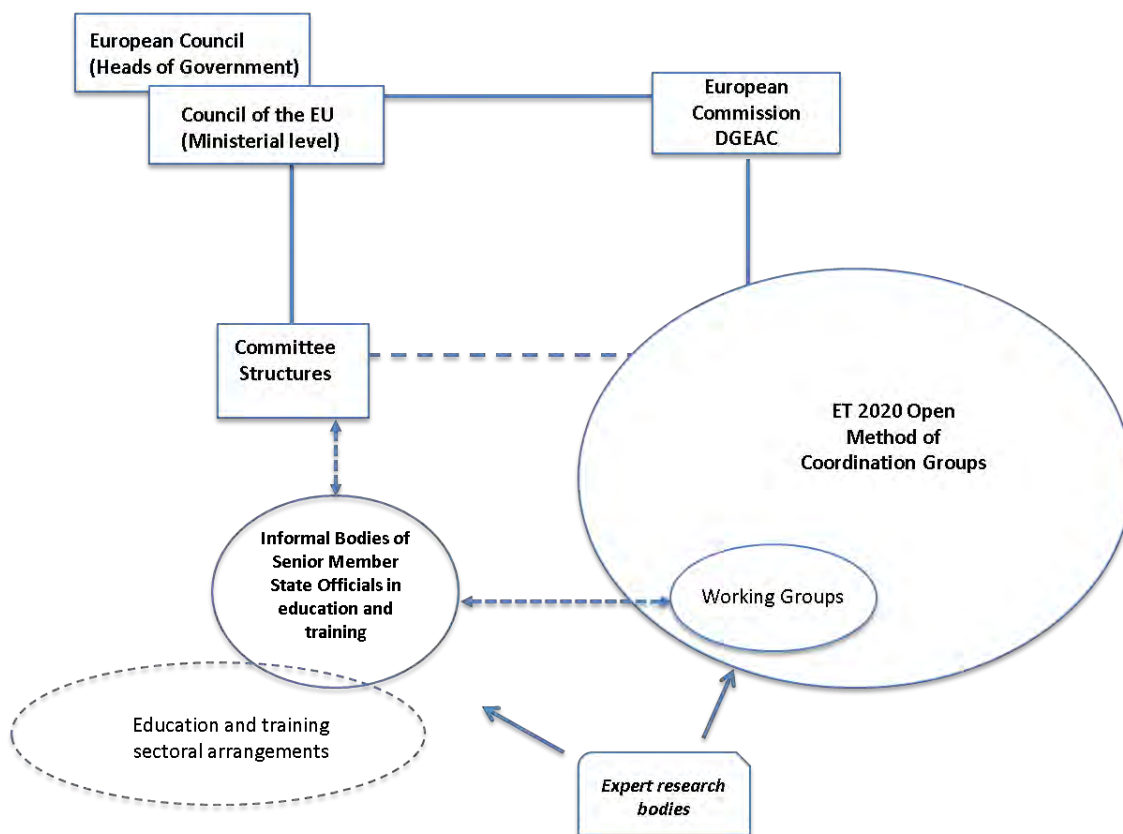
The bodies involved in ET 2020 are many and varied, encompassing both formal governance structures at political level through to informal bodies with no legal basis and time limited activities. An attempt has been made to represent this complexity in Figure 1.1. This diagram is used in modified form at various points throughout the report to help guide readers through the complex landscape and to reveal further detail where relevant. At this point, we highlight that: the formal governance structures at top left where political decisions have been made on the ET 2020 objectives; the important role of the European Commission in working with these political structures and in steering the entire OMC process; and, the informal groups which make up the bulk of the ET 2020 processes. These informal groups have no formal links with the formal governance structures, hence the use of dotted arrows to connect them.

- The European Council defines the EU's general political direction and priorities, and plays a leading role in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester. Its conclusions increasingly include references to the importance of education and training for economic recovery and employment;
- The Council brings together the Ministers in the formal Education, Youth, Culture and Sport configuration on average three times per year. In addition, it may meet informally. The Council adopts incentive measures, recommendations, resolutions and conclusions that drive ET 2020 work forward. Other Council configurations such as the Employment and Social Policy Council and the ECOFIN also play a role through their key responsibility in the European Semester context;
- The Ministers for Education and Training also meet outside the Council system. Every other year, they gather both in the framework of the Copenhagen process (on vocational education and training) and of the Bologna process (for higher education) to measure progress and set priorities for action;
- The Education Committee (a Council Working Party) prepares decision-making in the Education Council. Other preparatory Council committees, such as the Economic Policy Committee, the Employment

Committee and the Social Protection Committee also play a role through their responsibilities in the European Semester;

- The European Commission feeds the ET 2020 cooperation process with substantive policy Communications, Reports and Staff Working Documents and is the practical driving force behind the ET 2020 cooperation process (e.g. it establishes and coordinates the ET 2020 Working Groups);
- The High Level Group on Education and Training as well as the groupings of Directors General for Schools, Vocational Training, and Higher Education are informal meeting places for senior officials from the Member States and the Commission. They generally meet twice per year each to discuss European cooperation priorities in their areas of activity and to steer the activities of the ET 2020 Working Groups in their area of responsibility;
- The ET 2020 Working Groups are established by the Commission and are composed of experts nominated by Member States, candidate countries and EEA partner countries, relevant EU Agencies (such as CEDEFOP and ETF) and stakeholder organisations. They serve as fora for mutual learning and exchange of good practices, with the aim of fostering necessary national reforms and developing EU-level tools. Between 2009 and 2013, there were 11 so-called Thematic Working Groups (TWGs). Since 2014, they have been replaced by six new ET 2020 Working Groups (WGs);
- The Expert Groups on indicators and benchmarks include the overarching Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB) under which several specific Indicator Experts Groups on indicator and data development come together when requested; and
- The Expert Groups on transparency and recognition of qualifications, experiences and skills throughout the EU and on facilitating mobility include the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Group, the meetings of EQF National Coordination Points and of National Europass Centres, the Euroguidance Network, the Ploteus Coordination Group, the NARIC (National Recognition Information Centres) Network, the meetings of the ESCO Board, the ECVET Users' Group, and the Expert Group on factors affecting learning mobility.

**Figure 1-1 Simplified Representation of Bodies involved in ET 2020**





### 1.3 Background to Europe 2020 and the European Semester

There is a close Treaty link between education and training and employment policy. Art. 145 TFEU makes clear that Member States and the Union shall “work towards developing a coordinated strategy for employment and particularly for promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce and labour markets responsive to economic change with a view to achieving the objectives defined in Article 3 [TEU]”. Gradually, the scope of what was defined as “employment policy” was broadened into the direction of human capital formation (essentially education and training). Education and training elements thus became part of the EU’s guidelines for employment and the subsequent recommendations to the Member States foreseen under Art. 148 TFEU (and now integrated in the European Semester process).

The awareness amongst policy makers that education is important in stimulating growth, became apparent already when the Lisbon Strategy was devised, and it was reconfirmed when the European Commission proposed a new 10-year strategy on 3 March 2010. Europe 2020 aims at “*smart, sustainable, inclusive growth*” with greater coordination of national and European policy. Europe 2020 put forward three mutually reinforcing priorities:

- Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation;
- Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy; and
- Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

The strategy identifies five headline targets the European Union should take to boost growth and employment, one of which focuses specifically on education and training:

- To raise the employment rate of the population aged 20–64 from the current 69% to at least 75%;
- To achieve the target of investing 3% of GDP in R&D in particular by improving the conditions for R&D investment by the private sector, and develop a new indicator to track innovation;
- To reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% compared to 1990 levels or by 30% if the conditions are right, increase the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption to 20%, and achieve a 20% increase in energy efficiency;
- To reduce the share of early school leavers to 10% from the current 15% and increase the share of the population aged 30–34 having completed tertiary from 31% to at least 40%; and
- To reduce the number of Europeans living below national poverty lines by 25%, lifting 20 million people out of poverty.

The objectives of the strategy are also supported by seven ‘flagship initiatives’ providing a framework through which the EU and national authorities mutually reinforce their efforts in areas supporting the Europe 2020 priorities such as innovation, the digital economy, employment, youth, industrial policy, poverty, and resource efficiency. Two of the flagship initiatives announced in 2010, target education and youth: “*An agenda for new skills and jobs*” and “*Youth on the Move*”. Other EU levers such as the European single market, the EU budget, and the EU external agenda, also contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Monitoring progress and ensuring the active involvement of EU countries are key elements of the strategy. This is done through the European Semester, an annual cycle of macro-economic, budgetary and structural policy coordination. The key stages in the European semester are as follows. In November, the Commission issues its Annual Growth Survey, which sets out EU priorities for the coming year to boost growth and job creation. In 2013, the Annual Growth Survey focuses on: 1. Pursuing differentiated, growth-friendly fiscal consolidation; 2. Restoring lending to the economy; 3. Promoting growth and competitiveness for today and tomorrow; 4. Tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis; and 5. Modernising public administration.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/annual-growth-surveys/2013/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/annual-growth-surveys/2013/index_en.htm)

In February, the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament discuss the Annual Growth Survey. In March, EU Heads of State and Government (at the European Council) issue EU guidance for national policies on the basis of the Annual Growth Survey. In April, Member States submit their plans for sound public finances and reforms and measures to make progress towards smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (National Reform Programmes). In May, the Commission assesses these Programmes. In June, the Commission provides country-specific recommendations (CSRs) as appropriate. The European Council discusses and endorses the recommendations. In July, the Council of the European Union formally adopts the CSRs. In Autumn, the Governments present the budget draft to their Parliaments.

Country Specific Recommendations<sup>10</sup> are a key component of the Europe 2020 Strategy. CSRs are developed for Member States (MS) that are not Programme Countries. They are intended to provide guidance to MS in the context of their national policies through actions which *“are concrete, targeted and measurable, and concentrate on what can realistically be achieved in the next 12-18 months”*<sup>11</sup>. CSRs focus on structural reforms that will help enable the jobs and growth agenda, and they are produced each year within the European Semester. The CSRs for each MS are then developed within the framework of the priorities, and *“on the basis of a review of each Member State's economic and social performance in the previous year”*. The CSRs are not legislative tools, and their implementation is not compulsory for MS, but the fact that CSRs are debated by the Council, and are formally communicated by the Commission, gives political weight to them. Education and training-related CSRs are not formally part of ET 2020.

With the adoption of Europe 2020 by European Union, cooperation on education between Member States, supported by the European Commission, entered a new era. Even though Member States remain solely responsible for education, their commitment to the headline target means that they agreed to work towards common goals. The benchmarks for education were set in 2009, one year prior to Europe 2020, and were partly continued from ET 2010. Thus, already in the design of Europe 2020, the linkages between the education domain, where the EU has no formal competence other than encouraging cooperation, and a domain like employment, where the EU Treaties have established a strong coordination structure, were created.

This was new and markedly different from the preceding Lisbon Strategy. But the Commission is acting on a fine line here: on the one hand it needs to monitor progress towards commonly agreed goals under Europe 2020; and, on the other hand it cannot intervene in the field of education policies. In reality, there is a complex interaction between the various policy fields, instruments and actions. One of the key processes for helping Member States in improving their economies is the European Semester Process.

### 1.3.1 The interaction between ET 2020 and Europe 2020

In 2012, the Council has invited ET 2020 to become involved in the implementation of the challenges identified in the education and training-related CSRs. More specifically, the Commission was invited to *“Present to the Council a draft “ET 2020” work programme, with a view to ensuring the implementation of the priority areas for the second “ET 2020” work-cycle 2012-2014 and of the country-specific recommendations, where relevant. The work programme should specify for each priority area the planned action, timing and involvement of OMC working groups.”*<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm)

<sup>11</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-13-458\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-458_en.htm)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/133791.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/133791.pdf)

In a Joint Report<sup>13</sup> with Council in March 2012 the Commission had identified a stronger link between the ET 2020 OMC peer-learning activities and Europe 2020. ET 2020 activities (more specifically the current ET 2020 Working Groups and the annual Peer Review in the context of a Directors General meeting) focus in part on providing assistance to countries facing CSRs covering education and training.

The linkages between ET 2020, Europe 2020 and the European Semester are visible within the European Commission as well, for example through the structure of DG EAC, which was changed to accommodate for the new requirements of the European Semester. A new unit was started with Country Desk Officers who coordinate the relevant policy input for the Country Specific Recommendations. The work for the European Semester is coordinated by a number of core DGs: SG, ECFIN, EMPL and TAXUD. DG EAC feeds their input in the process through DG EMPL.

But also at Member State level, there are links between ET 2020, Europe 2020 and the European Semester. How these interact is part of the evaluation, and a returning topic in all evaluation questions.

## 1.4 ET 2020 Intervention logic

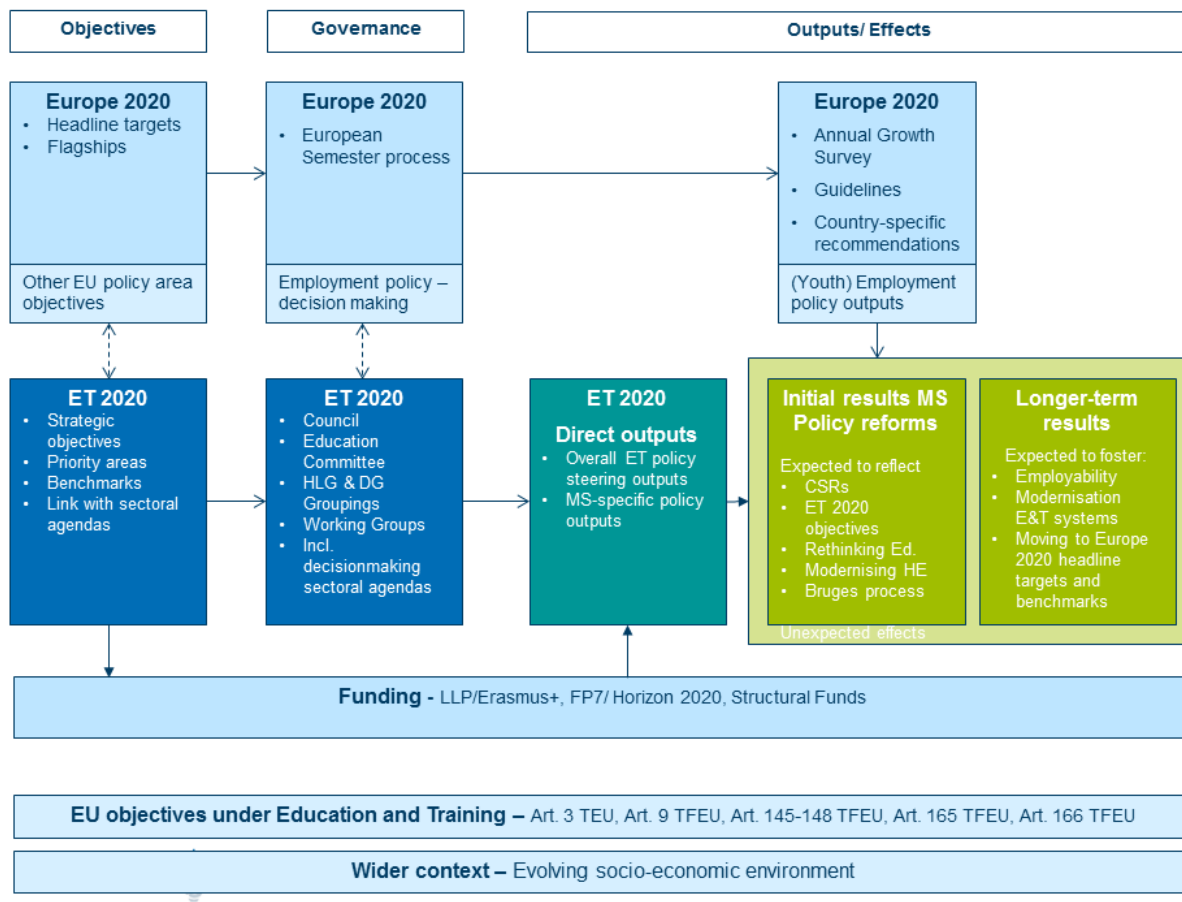
### 1.4.1 Types of impact of ET 2020

Figure 1.2 shows the intervention logic of ET 2020. At the bottom of the chart are references to some of the fundamental EU objectives and legal frameworks that justify the EU's action related to education and training.

ET 2020 has a number of direct outputs both at EU and Member State level. Types of output at EU level are for example the inclusion of specific calls for action to Member States in Council Conclusions, based on the work done by the Working Groups or research and projects commissioned by actors under ET 2020. This leads to outputs and effects at Member States, notably policy reforms to improve education and training systems. This ultimately leads to longer-term results, through the modernisation of various systems.

<sup>13</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:070:0009:0018:EN:PDF>

**Figure 1.2 Intervention logic of ET 2020 in relation to Europe 2020**



Source: Adapted from the Terms of References, DG EAC 2013

In order to understand how the OMC works, a further explanation of the types of effects is needed, specifically at the level of intermediaries: the people who actually take part in the OMC processes itself.

One of the challenges in studying the OMC process is that it includes a variety of instruments and interventions, which are typically tools for communication and knowledge exchange. As concrete outputs of the OMC a number of ‘products’ can be often be identified, including research papers, books, brochures, publications on the Web, presentation and dissemination through seminars and conferences, new or improved statistics and indicators for monitoring, new or improved database, web-enabled research networks, peer reviews, facilities for high-level meetings. The main activities within the OMC are often meetings, in which some sort of communication, knowledge exchange or persuasion takes place. Therefore an important element in our assessment h is to understand the types of impacts that can be expected and observed as a result of meetings planned and coordinated by DG EAC.

In order to systematically review these impacts there are insights from the world of training and communication. Already in 1959, Donald Kirkpatrick made a simple and compelling model for evaluating meetings and training sessions, which in essence is still used today<sup>14</sup>. When people go to a meetings or training, changes can occur at four levels, as follows:

- 1 Level 1: Reaction. This level measures how delegates reacted. Was it a valuable experience, did they feel good about the presenters, the topics, the materials, its presentation, and the venue? Often it is assumed that positive reactions are prerequisite for acceptance of the message, or for learning. Often the methodology used to measure Reaction is an evaluation sheet at the end of the meeting;
- 2 Level 2: Learning. This level measures what delegates have learned, in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Did delegates acquire any new knowledge or skills? Do they feel different about a certain topic? Often “learning outcomes” of meetings are not that explicit at all: questioning participants and hosts of the meetings often leads to a “sharper” picture of what is intended;
- 3 Level 3: Behaviour. This level measures what delegates have changed in their behaviour, based on the meeting, training or communication they received. Specifically, this looks at how delegates apply the information. Other factors, outside of the direct influence of the meeting hosts come at play here as well. Delegates can have the conviction and intention that they need to change something in the policy of their own country, however they cannot decide this alone and other factors can prevent a change in behaviour;
- 4 Level 4: Results. This level analyses the final results of the intervention. The type of results that can be expected from a “soft” intervention like a meeting or training is often limited: therefore identifying and finding “proof” of this level 4 is often difficult.

The table below provides an overview of potential indicators for each level related to OMC, which was used as a framework for developing the data collection instruments.

**Table 1.2 Levels of effectiveness of OMC meetings**

Level	Examples of indicators of effectiveness
<b>Level 1 Reaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived quality of the meetings</li> <li>• Perceived relevance</li> <li>• Quality of the speakers</li> <li>• Representativeness of relevant stakeholders from all MS</li> <li>• Up-to-date contents of the meetings</li> <li>• Active participation of all Member States during meetings</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2 Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of the topic and good practices among different stakeholders and general public</li> <li>• Increased awareness amongst ET 2020 policy-shapers (at EU and national levels) of the overall Europe 2020 priorities</li> <li>• Increased awareness of the topic among different stakeholders, participants</li> <li>• Improved and enriched information on good (and bad) practices in education</li> <li>• Increased understanding and knowledge of the subject by policymakers involved</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3 Behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of training contents and main discussions in participants' agencies</li> <li>• Mutual learning taking place in ET 2020 Thematic Working Groups</li> <li>• Application of good practices or other presented ideas</li> <li>• Application of new methodologies, indicators and statistics</li> <li>• Changes in institutional policies and practices</li> <li>• Continuing work in the area once the project is finished</li> <li>• Continuity in contacts established</li> <li>• Enhanced cooperation between stakeholders in different MS on identified issues</li> <li>• Intensified work in MS around the issues and topics in the focus of the meetings</li> </ul>

<sup>14</sup> See: Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1998). *Evaluating training programs*. Donald L. Kirkpatrick. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler. Kirkpatrick, D. (2010). The four levels are still relevant. Alexandria: American Society for Training & Development, Inc. Kirkpatrick, D. (1959) and J. Philips (2003). *Measuring the Return on Investment in Public Sector*. American Society for Training and Development.

Level	Examples of indicators of effectiveness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensified work in participants' agencies around the issues and topics in the focus of the workshops</li> <li>• Presentations of project results at other occasions</li> </ul>
<b>Level 4 Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering of policy innovation</li> <li>• Sustainable policy change at the level of the Member States</li> <li>• Incorporation of results in Commission Communications and Staff Working Documents</li> <li>• Incorporation of results in the Council Conclusions and Recommendations in education and training</li> <li>• Good practice of one Member State transferred in the education and training policy of other Member States</li> <li>• ET 2020 deliverables that become arguments in the national political/parliamentary debates on reform in education and training</li> <li>• Changes in policies and practices in MS</li> <li>• Outcomes of national educational reform (such as decrees, laws etc.) with reference to ET 2020 deliverables</li> <li>• Consistency of impacts with impacts of other Community programmes and initiatives</li> <li>• Continuous work in MS relevant agencies on the topic of the seminar</li> <li>• Enhanced coordination between MS on focal education issues</li> <li>• Provision of comparable and standardised data and statistics for the European databases by EU MS</li> <li>• Reflection in other policy documents at EU and national level</li> <li>• Reflection of meeting contents and topics in other EU and MS policy documents</li> <li>• Reflection of training contents and key discussions in MS policy documents</li> <li>• Relevant changes in institutional policies and practices</li> </ul>

## 1.5 Evaluation Methodology

The methodology undertaken for the interim evaluation involved desk research, stakeholder consultations, an online e-survey, and country-level research and consultations.

### 1.5.1 Desk research

A literature review was undertaken which was linked to the various ET 2020 policies, actors, and processes (particularly the OMC and the groups that participate in it). The literature coverage was further built up through the interviews with various stakeholders at the EU and Member State level (see below). An extensive review of the policy and related research literature was undertaken along with an assessment of various ET 2020 'deliverables' and outputs (for example, research reports, meeting notes, and various tools coming from various ET 2020 activities).

### 1.5.2 EU level stakeholders consultation

The interim evaluation consulted mainly on a face-to-face basis with a wide variety of stakeholders working at the EU level who are directly or indirectly linked to the EU education and training policy agenda. The initial list of EU level stakeholders was drawn up in consultation with the evaluation Steering Group, with further stakeholders identified through a snowball technique. These stakeholders included those directly involved in ET 2020 including people from DG EAC, attendees of Working Groups and Steering Groups, the Education Committee, the HLG on Education and Training and Directors General Grouping. Those indirectly involved in ET 2020 were also key consultees in the evaluation, including DGs that have a link to education and training (e.g. DG EMPL) as well as EU agencies (e.g. CEDEFOP), and 'actors' with a focus on this policy area (e.g. CIDREE, European Trade Union Confederation, European University Association, and European Schoolnet). In total 151 stakeholders were consulted.



### 1.5.3 Online Surveys

The aim of the surveys was to ensure as wider an audience as possible was able to feed their thoughts into the interim evaluation process. The response rate of these surveys was 32% and was completed by a total of 420 people. The surveys were aimed at two distinct stakeholder groups:

- Members of the Working Groups: All members and substitute members of the WGs and ET 2020 Working Groups were invited by email to participate in the e-survey. Responses were received from people working in 32 different countries, including all Member States. 55% of the respondents work in a Ministry of Education and another 10% work in another national administration. 18% work as an education or training provider and social partners. The large majority of the respondents work in public administration, either as policy official or sector expert (32%), in senior management (20%) or in middle management (13%). 9% are researchers and another 8% are teachers, trainers or school administrators; and
- Steering Groups relevant for the evaluation included the Education Committee, High Level Group on Education and Training, Directors General Groupings, Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks, and the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) Advisory Group. Responses were received from people working in 35 different countries, including all Member States. The profile of the respondents was very similar to the respondents of the working groups in terms of country of employer and function. 51% of the respondents work in a Ministry of Education and another 10% work in another national administration. 23% are employed as social partners.

### 1.5.4 Country level research

This key task was focussed on gaining the views of Member State level stakeholders working within the education and training agenda. In total 96 stakeholders were consulted in the Member State level research, of which some work both at EU and Member State level. The country level research helped understand many of the key issues emerging from the online e-survey, and the research allowed the evaluation to understand the reasons and drivers behind certain aspects in more detail. A key purpose of the Member State level research was to go beyond EU level stakeholders to understand how ET 2020 manifests itself at the country level. The research was particularly interested in the level of influence ET 2020 had on Member State policy, whether it was 'owned' by Member States as well as how useful practitioners and policy makers in Member States felt ET 2020 actually was.

The actual stakeholders consulted represented a wide spectrum of different players working in the policy agenda at Member State level – again directly and indirectly involved in ET 2020. Approximately half of stakeholders consulted were from the Ministries or central Government Departments linked with education or training, 30% were social partners, representative bodies or education and training practitioners, and 20% were made up of a group containing researchers, academics and experts. As with the EU level stakeholders, initial contacts for the Member State research was provided by DG EAC (through the relevant Desk Officers) with the use of the snowball technique to provide additional names of relevant people. 90% of the interviews were carried out on a face-to-face-basis.

### 1.5.5 Methodology – Strengths and Limitations

While the methodology aimed to maximise the breadth and depth of evidence that could be collected during the time-span of the evaluation, it was not possible (due both to the timeline of the evaluation and the resources available) to be comprehensive across all Member States and across all the stakeholders involved in the extensive ET 2020 landscape. The OMC groups across ET 2020 involve over 1000 actors (and different people may attend different meetings further increasing the number of direct participants) plus the Commission staff servicing the groups. Across 28 Member States there are many ministries and national actors directly and indirectly involved in education and training policy, and its wider relationship to the labour market. ET 2020 also has a linkage to the Europe 2020 Strategy for example in the context of Country Specific Recommendations.

Overall this made it difficult ‘a priori’ to define the boundaries of where ET 2020 ended. Consequently the methodology focused first on understanding the extent and structure of ET 2020, starting with those who are at the ‘core’ of ET 2020, who are responsible for enabling key activities. This focused on DG EAC sections primarily responsible for ET 2020: Directorate A responsible for “Europe 2020: Policy development and country analysis”, and particularly Unit 1. “Education and training in Europe 2020 governance”, and the Unit “Country Analysis” and its Country Desk Officers who particularly facilitated contacts with Member State stakeholders who would be interviewed. From the centre a ‘snowball’ technique was used to extend further into the fuller ET 2020 landscape. This approach ensured that we drilled down into the landscape coherently, rather than to try and piece together a jigsaw from the bottom-up.

The direct interviews at the EU and Country level were also undertaken by a team of senior consultants to ensure coherence across the interview process, and to ensure that the interviews involved structured discussions rather than passive collection of information according to an interview script. The interviewers coded their information to a stable ontology based on the evaluation questions and the judgment criteria.

The interviews at the EU level were done on the basis that comments would be attributed to interviewees unless they specifically requested otherwise. In fact attribution was accepted by all interviewees. At the Country level this proved more difficult, and in the end it was only possible to elicit interviews with some Member State stakeholders on the basis that the comments would not be attributed. So, unless a stakeholder explicitly agreed, the Country interview material was anonymised. Furthermore, only 10 of the 28 Member States were covered by interviews, so the results cannot be regarded as indicative of all of the EU 28.

The direct interviews were then supplemented by the online e-survey of OMC groups, focusing on the previous and current ET 2020 Working Groups, and the Steering Groups. The response rates (See Annex 7 for more detail) of 34% for each was sufficient to draw out differences between the two types of Groups, but not sufficient across Member States and between individual Groups to differentiate much further on a statistically reliable basis.

The triangulation of the results brought together the views of various stakeholders, desk research (particularly focussed on assessing the various deliverables and outputs of ET 2020 activities) as well as the results from the e-survey. These three ‘sections’ of the evidence base provided the evaluation with quantitative and qualitative information based on both primary and secondary research. The desk research was generally undertaken first, particularly in terms of understanding and collecting together the various outputs of ET 2020 (including minutes of meetings, discussion papers/ notes of events, but also the various research reports, tools and other outputs of various ET 2020 activities). This allowed the evaluators to draw an opinion of the strengths and weaknesses of various ET 2020 outputs before undertaking the primary research. This therefore made the interviews more focussed on drawing out specific views and opinions on issues highlighted in the desk research which helped in the triangulation process. The e-survey further helped with triangulation as it was specifically designed to provide quantitative data (through mainly closed questionnaires) across each of the main evaluation questions and judgement criteria. Triangulation of the results would have been enhanced by the use of other secondary ‘monitoring’ data and evidence collected



by the various activities of ET 2020 themselves. For instance, if TWGs would have systematically collected attendance records, if they would have used feedback sheets to understand peoples views on each session, if they would have taken notes or minutes of each meeting, and if a more complete repository of the outputs from their Working Group was undertaken then this too would have helped the evaluators with another aspect of the triangulation process. As stated later in this report, although some ET 2020 activities did 'monitor' their work (which we use in the evaluation) this was generally not the case across the board.

The stakeholder interviews and the results of the e-survey were particularly important to the evaluation as they provided the direct views and opinions of a wide range of people directly and indirectly involved in either ET 2020 activities or the wider education and training agendas in Member States. Although this means that some of the key evaluation findings are based on peoples views and perceptions- the opinions and comments of the 500 plus people who were involved in either the interviews or the e-survey are important to listen to and report. These individuals have either directly been involved in ET 2020 activities (e.g. have actually attended TWGs, been involved in drafting CSRs, Joint declarations or actually used the research reports and other outputs flowing from ET 2020 etc) and therefore it is legitimate that their views are taken on board when drawing together findings linked to issues such as effectiveness, coherence and efficiency. Those stakeholders in Member States who were interviewed through the evaluation but not directly involved in ET 2020 activities are also important stakeholders to listen to as they have the role of developing and reforming education and training systems which is the key overall goal of ET 2020. Because the evaluation has spoken to such a large volume of stakeholders (500+) across all Member States then this aspect of the evidence base is important to appreciate and means the points put forward in the report can be viewed as robust.

The problem of attribution is particularly significant in the case of an evaluation of a European level strategic framework like ET 2020. The way in which ET 2020 was set up makes it extremely difficult to identify the causal chains running from the objectives agreed through political processes at European level down to action in individual Member States. The open method of coordination in ET 2020 is intended to support Member States through the development of new ways of thinking and the sharing of good practice. Tracing lines of causality through such processes is extremely difficult, and the effect of the outputs of the open method of coordination on objectives is yet to be systematically monitored by the Commission. Even if the major issue of attribution could be overcome, the data required to demonstrate whether or not ET 2020 has been successful in achieving its objectives and priorities would be extremely difficult. This is already demonstrated by the fact that the benchmarks and indicators which it has been possible to devise at European level so far cover only a small part of what ET 2020 is supposed to achieve. Some of the strategic objectives involve concepts that are hard to measure (e.g. 'creativity', 'innovation', 'quality') and there are no metrics that are readily available to robustly understand achievements.

Lastly, the exploration of the working methods of the OMC groups was unevenly understood from the 'evidence' available at the public level through the Commission Register of Expert Groups and Similar Entities website<sup>15</sup>. For some of the OMC groups there were clearly provided minutes of meetings, with records of attendees, activities and outputs. For others there was little information. A lot of information about the groups is not clearly visible to the public domain, and although the evaluation requested documentation from the key OMC groups there was uneven provision. This meant the evaluators spent more time than originally envisaged collecting 'what' ET 2020 had done rather than spending resources on understanding its effectiveness, relevance, coherence and so on. Consequently it is difficult for the evaluation to make consistent and substantive comments regarding the detailed working methods of the groups. It was possible, however, to focus on how sectoral groups (particularly VET) can build integration and coherence across the groups. The lack of a clear monitoring process which collects in a systematic way the activities, outputs and impacts of ET 2020 is dealt with later in the report as well as in the conclusions and recommendations section of the report.

<sup>15</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm>

### 1.5.6 Structure of the Evaluation Report

This draft final report is structured as follows:

- This section has provided an introduction to the evaluation and outlines the main aims and context to the study;
- **Section 2** provides as assessment of the relevance and coherence of ET 2020 strategic objectives (EQ1);
- **Section 3** looks at the overall effectiveness of ET 2020 (EQ2);
- **Section 4** looks at the effectiveness of ET 2020 governance methods and policy instruments (EQ3);
- **Section 5** looks at the relationship between ET 2020 and relevant EU funding programmes (EQ4); and
- **Section 6** provides conclusions and recommendations.

## 2.0 EQ 1 Relevance and Coherence of ET 2020 Strategic Objectives

**Evaluation Question 1: To what extent are ET 2020 strategic objectives and priority areas (2009-2011 and 2012-2014) relevant and coherent with the needs of: a) Europe 2020: b) the European sectorial policy agendas for schools, VET, adult learning, higher education, and relevant transversal questions (entrepreneurship, ICT and multilingualism): c) The Youth Employment Package (incl. the Youth Guarantee).**

“Relevance” focuses on the extent to which the aims of an intervention are pertinent to the needs, problems and issues being addressed. “Coherence” considers how well interventions work together. Since ET 2020 covers a wide range of activities, we look at the internal coherence within ET 2020 as well as coherence with the wider Europe 2020 agenda. The first Evaluation Question is focused at the EU level and evaluates ET 2020 in a number of ‘directions’: ‘outwards’ from the education and training policy domain(s) to Europe 2020 and the Youth Employment Package/Youth Guarantee (in the employment policy domain); and, ‘inwards’ within the education and training domain to the various sectorial and transversal policy agendas. Hence there are two judgement criteria (JC) to deal with this duality. A critical issue is to determine the extent to which ET 2020 is a force for change in respect of both the ‘outwards’ and ‘inwards’ aspects. The judgement of relevance and coherence is based on desk research of relevant documentation and also on surveys and interviews with individuals knowledgeable of relevant EU policy domains.

Under each Judgment criterion several sub indicators were addressed.

JC 1.1 The ET 2020 strategic objectives, priority areas and the related Commission Communications and Council Conclusions (such as “*Rethinking Education*”) have been effective contributors to and/or are a relevant and coherent driving force in support of the EU’s broader growth and jobs agenda.

- To what extent are the ET 2020 priority areas linked to the overall Europe 2020 priorities to enable mutual relevance and coherence?
- To what extent is the system of adaptable ET 2020 priority areas for each 3-year work cycle able to guarantee a continuing relevance and coherence in light of the evolving priorities of Europe 2020 and the Youth Employment Package?
- To what extent are the ET 2020 policy-shapers (at EU and national levels) aware of the overall Europe 2020 priorities?
- To what extent are additional Commission Communications able to guarantee a continuing relevance and coherence in light of the evolving priorities of Europe 2020 and the Youth Employment Package?

JC 1.2 The ET 2020 strategic objectives, priority areas and the related Commission Communications and Council Conclusions are a relevant and coherent driving force in relation to European sectorial and transversal policy agendas (providing an overall rationale and purpose for education and training cooperation and reform):

- To what extent are the European sectorial agendas linked to the overall ET 2020 and Europe 2020 priorities to enable mutual relevance and coherence? To what extent are the sectorial agendas able to guarantee a continuing relevance and coherence in light of the evolving priorities of ET 2020 and Europe 2020?
- To what extent are the European-level policy-shapers of the sectorial agendas (at EU and national levels) aware of the overall ET 2020 and Europe 2020 priorities?

## Summary Answer: EQ1 Relevance and Coherence of ET 2020 Strategic Objectives

As ET 2020 includes a wide range of steering mechanisms, both in terms of bodies involved and steering documents produced. The question here is whether a number of specific elements of ET 2020 have been effective contributors in support of the EU's broader growth and jobs agenda: i.e. the strategic objectives, the priority areas and related Commission Communications and Conclusions (JC 1.1).

- Strategic objectives of ET 2020, when sufficiently focused, can guide the subsequent policy process through setting the agenda, prioritizing some problems over others, providing policy makers and shapers a list of issues they need to focus their activities on. The initial Council Conclusions forming the basis of ET 2020 do not show a coherent and logical design, in terms of the 4 strategic objectives and the subsequent priorities and benchmarks. In areas where such logic does exist, there seems to be more activity taking place and more outputs reported.
- The ET 2020 decision was linked with EU 2020 in two areas through the inclusion of reference levels: Early School Leaving and modernization of Higher Education. Activities and outputs on both themes have been significant, thus suggesting that the ET 2020 acted as a driving force.
- The majority those directly involved in ET 2020, indicate that the framework with rather broad objectives and priority areas, gives enough flexibility for Member States to select themes that are relevant to them. Europe 2020 as a broader agenda is an important anchor for those involved in Education and Training as well.
- Overall the analysis shows consistency between the Communications/Council conclusions (and therefore supported by MSs) and ET 2020. There is consistency in the underlying vision while each agenda focuses on slightly different priorities. There are no significant gaps, and there is a common attention for evolving priorities.
- There is coherence and relevance between ET 2020 and the Youth Employment Package if we look at the objectives, although suggestions were made to increase the cooperation and exchange of information between the relevant bodies.

JC 1.2 The ET 2020 strategic objectives, priority areas and the related Commission Communications and Council Conclusions are a relevant and coherent driving force in relation to European sectoral and transversal policy agendas (providing an overall rationale and purpose for education and training cooperation and reform)

Each sector has its own distinct profile in terms of its engagement with ET 2020. Two sectors, Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET), have well-developed bodies of policy and policy-development processes. In the schools sector and adult education sector, this is less the case.

- The Commission Communications and Council Conclusions that were published since 2010, cover all sectors of education.
- In VET there is a clear link with Europe 2020, most clearly visible through the many CSRs that deal with VET.
- In Higher Education, the existence of a target already in ET 2020, which later became an integral part of Europe 2020, provides a strong link. The fact that the Working Group on Higher Education has focussed its efforts on addressing CSRs in peer learning activities, is further proof of relevance and coherence. The Modernisation Agenda for HE has been an influential Communication. There is compatibility with the Bologna process, where ET 2020 is perceived as a broader policy framework.

## Summary Answer: EQ1 Relevance and Coherence of ET 2020 Strategic Objectives

- In relation to the schools sector, two important Communications were presented, on Early School Leaving (ESL) and on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). In Europe 2020 early school leaving (ESL) is addressed as one of the headline targets, ensuring its central position in the policy actions related to education and training. The increase in the number of CSRs related to issues in the schools sector, is another sign that relevance of the Schools sector for Europe 2020 is acknowledged. Because there is no other EU level structure for discussing policy issues in the Schools sector, one can assume that ET 2020 has a clear added value in this sector.
- The adult learning sector is in its infancy in many parts of Europe, and while some countries have well-developed adult learning sectors, others do not. An important milestone was the Revised EU agenda on Adult Learning in 2011, created specifically in the framework of ET 2020. Implementation by Member States is supported by the appointment in each country of a National Coordinator for Adult Learning, funded by LLP/ Erasmus+.

### **2.1 The ET 2020 strategic objectives, priority areas and the related Commission Communications and Council Conclusions have been effective contributors to and/or are a relevant and coherent driving force in support of the EU's broader growth and jobs agenda (JC 1.1)**

The scholarly literature on peer review, benchmarking and peer learning activities organized by international organisations (e.g. EU, World Bank, OECD), provides valuable insights when assessing the function and role of the strategic objective.

Research on cross-national policy exchange and learning view the strategic objectives underlying these activities (see EQ1) as a source of framing or agenda-setting. Objectives are important points of departures for policy-shapers/makers, and inform them what (not) to focus on. Policies can develop through a series of stages, starting with the definition of a situation, condition or phenomenon as a problem and subsequently gaining attention of policy makers ('attention change') in the agenda setting phase (Kingdon 1984).

Attending to challenges is a 'sine qua non' of policy making and is a precursor of policy change. Not all attention changes result in policy changes, but major policy changes are always preceded by attention changes (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Setting the agenda, through formulating objectives, means allocating attention across policy issues, which involves both selection and prioritization (Cobb and Elder 1971). Agenda-setting studies depart from the assumption that there are many more problems than policy makers can possibly attend to, and each may be extremely complex. These challenges lead to attention scarcity (Jones and Baumgartner 2005) and the selection of some problems to focus on while ignoring others. Hence, through the choice for certain specific objectives, a perceived neutral 'condition' in the domestic policy sphere, can be framed into a problem, gains priority over other issues on the agenda, persuading domestic policy-makers to construct their proposals within the framework set by the (strategic) objectives (Lopez-Santana 2006; Alexiadou 2007; Lange and Alexiadou 2007).

When the objectives are phrased in specific terms, and ask for addressing a certain problem, the framework of strategic objectives does not always function as an uncontroversial definition of sound policies. The objectives can substantively affect the redistributive outcomes of policies, often even before policies are debated in national parliaments or are a topic of discussion in the media (see on the role of objectives in OMCs in the European Union: Meyer 20005; Visser 2005; Buchs 2008a; Buchs 2008b; Duina and Raunio 2007: 502; Heidenreich and Bischoff 2008; Kröger 2007: 658; Tsakatika 2007: 550; Kröger 2009; Heidenreich and Zeitlin 2009).

In sum, the (strategic) objectives of ET 2020, when sufficiently focused, can guide the subsequent policy process through setting the agenda, prioritizing some problems over others, providing policy makers and shapers a list of issues they need to focus their activities on. Hence, the choice for the strategic objectives (see EQ1) and the ET 2020 objectives are of utmost importance for the effective and efficient diffusion of best policy practices through. For example, the OMC (see EQ 3) and sets the boundaries for the policy improvements in national education policies to be achieved (see EQ2).

Taking the original 2009 Council Conclusions, which are the basis for ET 2020, they do not explicitly refer to certain problems identified, which could be solved by means of ET 2020. Rather, the text communicates that ET 2020 is the result of earlier experiences with cooperation at European level, which has proven to be valuable. It was acknowledged that cooperation under the ET 2010 programme, which led to significant progress being made, still had substantial challenges remaining for Europe is to achieve its ambition to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

Although the text contains an overview of the priority areas under each strategic objectives, the choice of these priority areas was more based on existing work in areas such as the European Qualifications Framework, Language learning, pre-primary education and education partnerships. A logical link with the “Reference levels of European average performance” (the benchmarks) is missing.

Figure 2.1 shows the building blocks of ET 2020, and aims to reconstruct the logic between the problems and needs identified, the strategic objectives, priority areas and reference levels.

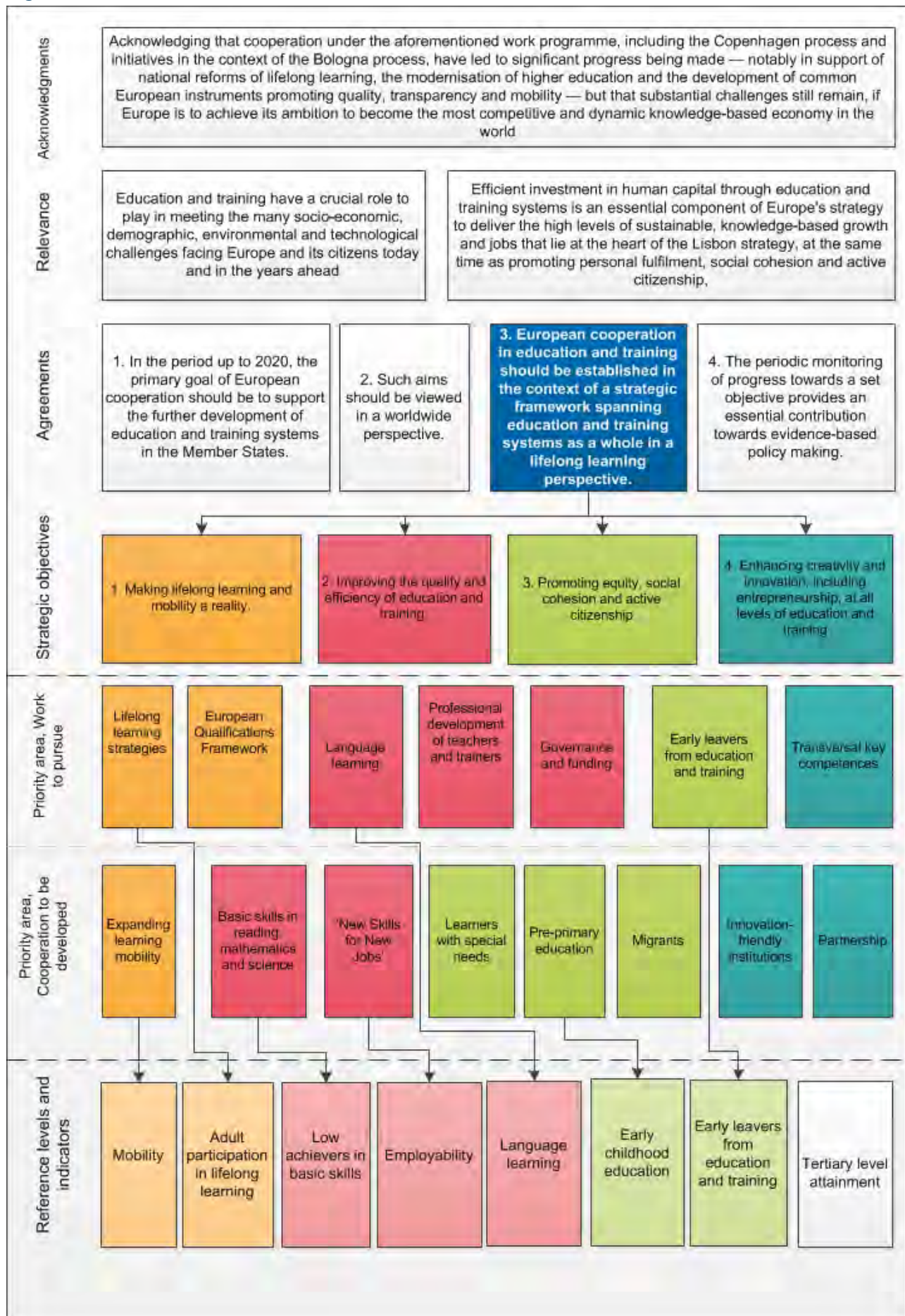
Based on the four strategic objectives, seven priority areas were defined. They vary from quite specific and concrete priorities, such the European Qualifications Framework, to broader themes like “Lifelong learning strategies”. Then eight new priorities were identified. The priority areas were categorized under each strategic objective, however the links are not strong in cases, such as “New skills for new jobs” under the Strategic objective 2, which deals with improving quality and efficiency.

The Council conclusion does not make an explicit link between the reference levels and the priority areas at all. Based on 15 priority areas, they would logically be linked to 15 indicators or reference levels. However, only 5 were identified and 3 more were to be developed. Although most of these indicators have some link with the priority areas, the Tertiary level attainment has no link to any of the priority areas.

Furthermore, the 15 priority areas were accompanied only by 11 Working Groups, making it difficult for a WG to focus explicitly on a priority area.



Figure 2.1 The ET 2020 Council Conclusion



The structural design of ET 2020 is such that it does not logically, systematically and directly link the strategic objectives with indicators and benchmarks, sectoral agenda-setting and monitoring. The strategic objectives can read as all-encompassing statements on what is aspired to in respect to education and training. In contrast to what could be expected in an OMC, the ET 2020 indicators and benchmarks lead a life on their own (with their own annual Monitor), but do not serve as a tool to monitor direct progress in the achievement of the strategic objectives. This structure makes it difficult to assess the degree to which the ET 2020 strategic objectives have actually served as an engine for European cooperation. In this light, it can be reported that the majority of stakeholders recognised that the strategic objectives are relatively broad, and therefore, that the extent to which they are a driving force for ET 2020 activities was often a difficult question to answer. As one country level stakeholder stated *“it is difficult to identify any activities [related to ET 2020] that could not be aligned to the [strategic] objective”*.

Of the participants undertaking the e-survey, about half note that the strategic objectives need at least modernisation. Among them, 6% think a total overhaul is required. Of members of the Working Groups, 44% support in modernisation of the current objectives. While 39% think that no change is needed to the objectives.

When asked about concrete suggestions for changes, a variety of responses is given there was no dominating response, for example some respondents are in favour of keeping the existing objectives, but modify or update the wording where needed to include new elements. Where there was agreement is related to the linkage between education and employment: there is a need for closer connections. Also the changes that are the result of the economic crisis should be addressed and the ET 2020 strategic objectives, and should to be better linked to other policies (employment, regional development, innovation, competitiveness).

During the interviews and country level research, the reasons given by those not in favour of changing the strategic objectives highlighted that:

- Both the respondent to the survey (Working and Steering Group members) as well as the interviewees from the country case studies generally acknowledged that the strategic objectives are broad, but this can be positive as it provides Member States with a certain degree of flexibility as well as allowing DG meetings and Working Groups etc. a certain amount of influence to do what they feel useful and necessary, without being ‘controlled by strong and specific strategic objectives’;
- Member States taking part in the country level research emphasised that it was important for the ET 2020 strategic objectives to not ‘interfere’ with their own national objectives on education and training. This again led them to suggest that a broader set of objectives was a firm preference as it helps provide ‘steer’ for their national policies but does not control or dominate them;
- The country level research highlighted that any significant changes in the strategic objectives of ET 2020 would be hard to ‘act upon’ as the timescales involved in reforming education and training at the Member State level is significant. For example, in Germany a time horizon of 7-10 years was felt to be required to make serious reforms in the country’s education and training system. If ET 2020 was to alter its objectives ‘half way through’ then actual change at the operational level as a consequence of this would be limited;
- There was some discussion from open ended responses from the e-survey as well as from EU level stakeholder interviews that the strategic objectives of ET 2020 would benefit from being prioritised. Doing this would help provide more focus to ET 2020 and allow activities, funding and overall engagement with ET 2020 to also be prioritised by Member States. However, there were responses to the e-survey and country level research which also stated that they valued the fact that the objectives were not prioritised. Trying to rank the objectives in some form of importance would possibly encourage certain Member States to focus on issues that are less relevant and would be viewed by some as the European Commission being more controlling;



- Although the strategic objectives were important ‘building blocks’ of ET 2020 overall, it was the activities, targets and infrastructure that sits underneath these objectives that are the most important aspects of whether ET 2020 is being effective. Again the effective and efficient ‘implementation’ of these broad objectives was therefore seen as paramount; and
- For some Member States the objectives of ET 2020 are not sufficiently challenging. The change of the economic situation since 2008 onward would have required stronger actions. Some of the objectives of ET 2020 are too weak and Member states have taken stronger measures in improving the quality of education and training, further the education and training of adults, renewing the legislation of pre-primary education, and taking structural measures regarding the responsibilities of municipalities.

### 2.1.1 To what extent are the ET 2020 strategic objectives and priority areas linked to the overall Europe 2020 priorities to enable mutual relevance and coherence?

The initial ET 2020 strategic objectives acknowledge the results of earlier work done under the Lisbon strategy. Already in ET 2010 there was acknowledgment that Education and Training have a role to play in the wider agenda, so even though Europe 2020 came after ET 2020, it is possible to look at the linkages between ET 2020 and the wider agenda for growth and jobs.

Two targets of ET 2020 that were agreed by the Council in 2009, became an integral part of Europe 2020, which was established in 2010. Thus a certain level of interconnectivity was guaranteed from the start.

In the field of Higher Education, the ambitions for increasing the tertiary attainment level became part of Europe 2020, thus ensuring high political commitment. Later, when the European Semester was introduced in 2012, mechanisms for monitoring progress were introduced for this indicator. In addition, in School Education the target on early leavers from education and training was introduced, which was part of ET 2020 and became an element of Europe 2020.

For the other priority areas, the linkage with Europe 2020 is more indirect and in some cases less straightforward. For example, the theme “professional development of teachers and trainers” is primarily linked to the education sector. “Topics like “New Skills for New Jobs and Basic Skills – that underline all learning and teaching processes - are also quite relevant and directly linked to employability and Europe 2020. “Language learning” also has a relation with the job market and employability, and it is not just a means of improving the European economy.

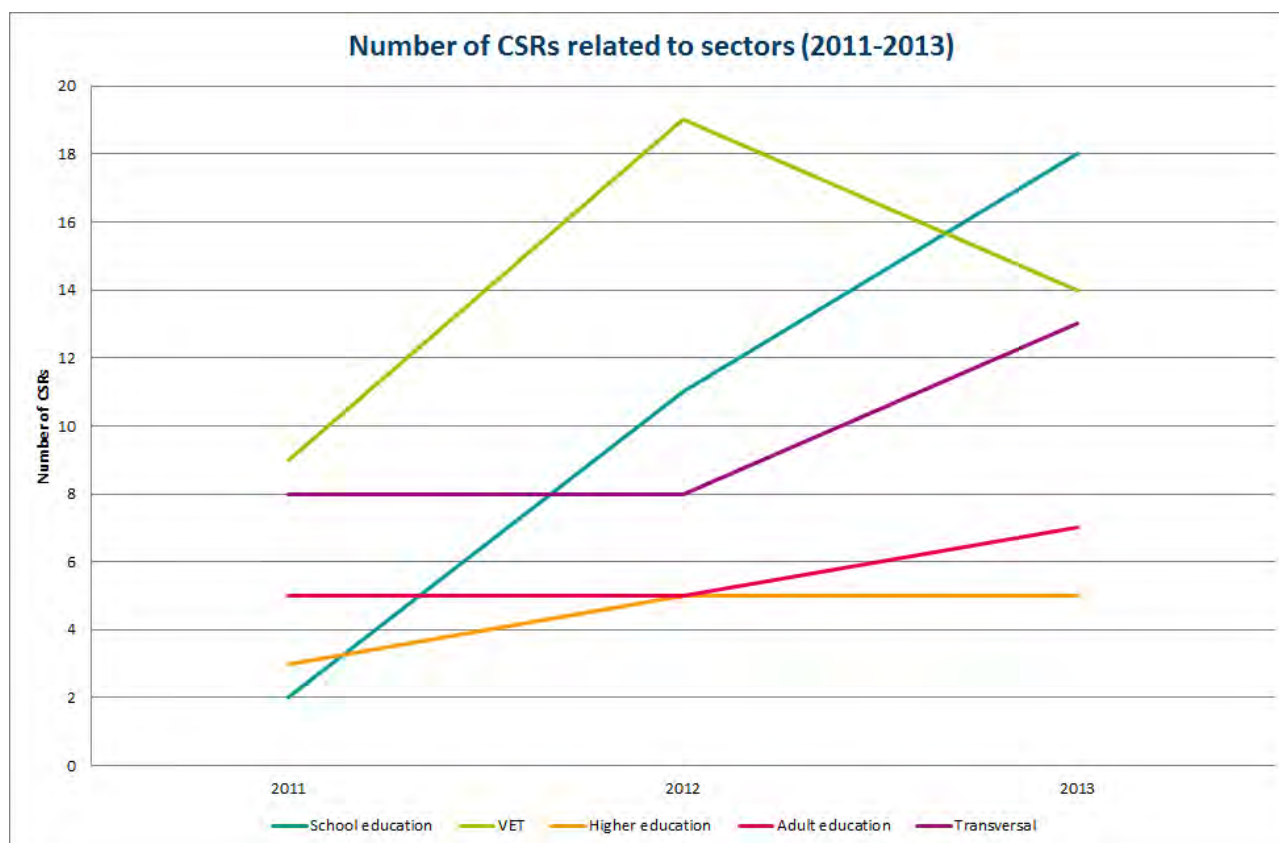
One way of assessing the relevance of the ET 2020 strategic objectives and priority areas for the overall Europe 2020 priorities is to look at the extent to which topics under ET 2020 were adopted in the Country specific Recommendations (CSRs), under the European Semester.

A substantial number of topics developed under ET 2020 and the priority area, have found their way in the CSRs. Table 2.1 shows a number of examples, of CSRs related to different sectors from 2013.

An indication of the growing importance of education in CSRs can be deducted from counting the number of CSRs related to education. Although the exact numbers should be read with caution, because some interpretation of wording needed<sup>16</sup>, the trends are clear. The number of CSRs is growing in all sectors, most clearly in School education.

<sup>16</sup> There is no way to give an exact count of the numbers per sector, as the formulation of CSRs is such that some can be linked to multiple sectors (i.e. “Improve access to inclusive mainstream education”). At the same time some of the CSRs are clearly linked to one sector (i.e. “Adopt measures to enhance accreditation and funding of higher education”). The point here is not to give the exact numbers, but to show a trend. We categorized the CSRs based on our own judgment.

**Figure 2.2 Number of CSRs for each sector (2011-2013)**



**Table 2.1 Examples of CSRs related to education (2013).**

Examples of CSRs (2013)	
<b>School education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent school drop-out</li> <li>• Establish a comprehensive evaluation framework in compulsory education and take targeted measures to support schools that rank low in educational outcomes.</li> <li>• Implement a national strategy on early school-leaving and ensure that the education system provides all young people with labour-market-relevant skills, competences and qualifications</li> <li>• Improve access to inclusive mainstream education, for those with disadvantages, in particular Roma</li> <li>• Improve school quality and outcomes, also by enhancing teachers' professional development and diversifying career development</li> </ul>
<b>VET</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop capacity for identifying and matching skill needs</li> <li>• Improve the quality of vocational training to reduce drop-out rates and increase the number of apprenticeships. Implement the reform of primary and lower secondary education in order to raise attainment levels and improve the cost-effectiveness of the education system</li> <li>• Take further measures to improve the transition from school to work through, for example, a Youth Guarantee and promotion of apprenticeship.</li> <li>• Step up reforms in vocational education and training. Further align tertiary education with the needs of the labour market and improve access for disadvantaged people</li> <li>• Increase the quality and duration of apprenticeships, simplify the system of qualifications and strengthen the engagement of employers, particularly in the provision of advanced and intermediate technical skills.</li> </ul>
<b>Higher Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take measures to reduce drop-outs from higher education</li> <li>• Adopt measures to enhance accreditation and funding of higher education.</li> <li>• Enhance cooperation between businesses, higher education and research institutions</li> <li>• Implement a higher-education reform that enables greater tertiary attainment, particularly by disadvantaged students</li> </ul>

Examples of CSRs (2013)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the planned reforms of higher education concerning, in particular, the establishment of a quality-rewarding financing model, reform of the accreditation system, consolidation of the institutions and promotion of internationalization</li> </ul>
<b>Adult Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the employability of workers, in particular for second earners and low-skilled</li> <li>• Reinforce the effectiveness of re-skilling training programmes for older and low-skilled workers</li> <li>• Take specific action to improve the employment perspective of older unemployed people in particular through specific counselling and training. Increase adult participation in lifelong learning, especially of the least qualified and of the unemployed</li> <li>• Reinforce training programmes to boost participation in lifelong learning.</li> <li>• Reduce financial disincentives for second earners to work and improve the provision of care, especially child and long-term care, and out-of-school services</li> <li>• ... promoting lifelong learning.</li> <li>• Take further measures to increase employment of young tertiary graduates, older persons and the low-skilled by focusing resources on tailor-made active labour market policy measures while improving their effectiveness.</li> </ul>
<b>Transversal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the transition between different stages of education and towards the labour market</li> <li>• Protect expenditure in areas directly relevant for growth such as education, innovation and research</li> <li>• Speed up the education reform including the building up of administrative capacity at both central and local level and evaluate the impact of the reforms.</li> <li>• Simplify and reinforce coherence between employment incentives, activation policies, labour matching, education, lifelong learning and vocational training policies for older people and youth</li> <li>• Take measures to raise the educational achievement of disadvantaged groups, in particular through ensuring equal opportunities in the education and training system.</li> <li>• Continue efforts to improve the labour-market relevance of education and training systems, including by further involving social partners and implementing targeted measures to address youth unemployment. Significantly increase the participation of the low skilled in life-long learning</li> </ul>

### 2.1.2 To what extent is the system of adaptable ET 2020 priority areas for each 3-year work cycle able to guarantee a continuing relevance and coherence in light of the evolving priorities of Europe 2020 and the Youth Employment Package?

To ensure continuing relevance in a period of 10 years, it may be necessary to adjust the activities under ET 2020, and this is facilitated through setting the priorities over periods of three years. The Council Conclusion described a three year cycle for ET 2020, after which a Joint Report of the Council and Commission is published. This process aims to ensure that the ET 2020 continues to be relevant. The first Joint Report was published in March 2012<sup>17</sup>, and a headline conclusion was that “*ET 2020 must be adjusted by updating its working priorities, tools and governance structure*”. This made it clear that although ET 2020 required some ‘re-tuning’, the objectives were still generally relevant. It also highlighted that it was the ‘implementation and delivery of the objectives’ (and the strategy overall) which is the key element of the effectiveness of ET 2020 going forward.

The European priority areas were designed to allow either for broad cooperation between all the Member States or for closer cooperation between a more limited number of Member States, in accordance with their national priorities. As Table 2.1 shows, many of the priority areas have remained the same between 2009 and 2014, with some slight adjustments and changes. The priorities “‘New Skills for New Jobs’, ‘Language Learning’, ‘Migrants’, ‘Learners with special needs’ were integrated in other priority areas, often as part of a broader label (i.e. “Language learning” became part of “Basic skills, languages”). In the Joint Report of 2012, “Attractiveness and relevance of VET” was added as a priority area.

<sup>17</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:070:0009:0018:EN:PDF>

The 2012 Joint Report mentions that the list of mid-term priority areas agreed in 2009 was replaced by a new one geared to mobilise education and training to support growth and jobs, and that this was done “*on the basis of the Commission’s assessment and the consultation of Member States and European stakeholder organisations*”.

**Table 2.2 Evolving ET 2020 priority areas**

	ET 2020 priority areas, 2009-2011	ET 2020 priority areas, 2012-2014
<b>Strategic objective 1: Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lifelong learning strategies</li> <li>• European Qualifications Framework</li> <li>• Expanding learning mobility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lifelong learning strategies</li> <li>• European reference tools</li> <li>• Learning Mobility</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic objective 2: Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language learning</li> <li>• Professional development of teachers and trainers</li> <li>• Governance and funding</li> <li>• Basic skills in reading, mathematics and science</li> <li>• ‘New Skills for New Jobs’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development of teachers, trainers and school leaders</li> <li>• Efficient funding and evaluation</li> <li>• Basic skills (literacy, mathematics, science and technology), languages</li> <li>• Attractiveness and relevance of VET</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic objective 3: Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early leavers from education and training</li> <li>• Pre-primary education</li> <li>• Migrants</li> <li>• Learners with special needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early School Leaving</li> <li>• Early childhood education and care (ECEC)</li> <li>• Equity and diversity</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic objective 4: Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transversal key competences</li> <li>• Innovation-friendly institutions</li> <li>• Partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transversal key competences, entrepreneurship education, e-literacy, media literacy, innovative learning environments</li> <li>• Partnerships with business, research, civil society</li> </ul>

Within the set of priorities there are cross-sectoral and transversal issues, as well as some that have a more sectoral focus. This takes into account some of the principles outlined in the Council conclusions when pursuing the strategic objectives: (a) European cooperation in education and training should be implemented in a lifelong learning perspective and developing synergies between the different education and training sectors; and (b) where relevant, cross-sectoral cooperation should be sought between EU initiatives in education and training and those in related policy areas.

While the priority areas are presented slightly differently than the strategic objectives, taken together they are also broad. Therefore, the same caveat applies to the priority areas as to the strategic objectives. It is difficult to assess the value of the priority areas as driving forces of ET 2020 cooperation, also because they do clearly exert a concrete influence in terms of ET 2020 agenda-setting. At the same time, it is hardly possible to identify any activities related to ET 2020 that could not be aligned to the priority areas.

The pitfall of having general objectives, and a menu of priorities, as at present, is that the impact of the strategic framework in terms of working towards the same (short term) goals, is more limited since attention is spread across many themes. Since the capacity to work on a wide variety of topics is limited, both at EU and at Member State level, this is a risk. Evidence from the interviews suggest that this is the case as well.

### 2.1.3 To what extent are the ET 2020 policy-shapers (at EU and national levels) aware of the overall Europe 2020 priorities?

In order to create effective linkages between ET 2020 and the wider agenda, the main policy actors in education and training need to be aware of the wider agenda, such as Europe 2020 and the Youth Employment Package. During interviews in the initial stage of the evaluation, a number of interviewees pointed out that Education and Training is sometimes treated in isolation from the wider policy arena. Experts and representatives from national ministries of Education do not necessarily speak with colleagues from ministries of Finance, Economy or Employment, who are more directly involved in Europe 2020 and the European Semester.

Members from Steering and Working Groups were asked questions about the Europe 2020 strategy, and how they feel that ET 2020 contributed. The majority of the participants undertaking the e-survey indicated that their knowledge of the Europe 2020 strategy to be moderate (55%) and high (40%). The awareness of Country-Specific Recommendations, which are an integral part of the European Semester process, is high, 73% being well aware and 21% vaguely aware. One out of three in the Steering groups is involved personally in the implementation of Country-Specific Recommendations, and another third is involved marginally, whereas 30% is not involved. Given their background and knowledge of both ET 2020 and Europe 2020, this group is an important source for assessing the extent to which ET 2020 is supporting the wider Europe 2020 agenda.

When asked whether Member States who face issues identified in the European Semester, are supported by the ET 2020 mechanisms (such as TWG's Experts Groups, peer learning), 60% of the Steering Groups indicated that this is the case to some extent. 13% were very positive, 8% indicated that support is limited or even absent (3%). 15% indicated that they do not know. Within the Working Groups, 27% were very positive, and 52% somewhat positive. When asked whether Member States have been able to make effective use of the ET 2020 outputs, the Steering Groups answers are spread: 8% responded "no", 33% "yes", 33% "marginally" and 27% "cannot answer". Participants in the e-survey also indicated to what extent they focus on the link between ET 2020 and Europe 2020 priorities in their activities. A very small percentage (4%) indicated that they very much focus on this link, and 4% indicated that they do not focus on that link at all. Almost half (49%) indicated they do this to a limited extent, and 43% that they focus their activities to a large extent on Europe 2020 priorities.

The evidence suggests that ET 2020 priority areas and activities are clearly linked to the overall Europe 2020 priorities, according to nearly half of those involved closely in ET 2020. Therefore many stakeholders recognize that there is a linkage, and ET 2020 supports the wider EU agenda. However, there still is work to be done: approximately half of those involved, do not see a clear linkage between ET 2020 and Europe 2020.

Almost half of the participants in the working and steering groups indicate that they clearly focus their work on the broader Europe 2020 agenda, in their activities. Also awareness of the broader agenda within this community is high. The awareness of and involvement in for example the European Semester is quite high within the ET 2020 community.

### 2.1.4 To what extent are additional Commission Communications able to guarantee a continuing relevance and coherence in light of the evolving priorities of Europe 2020 and the Youth Employment Package?

The Commission initiated several Communications on education and training, which would be expected to complement some of the broader objectives set out in ET 2020 with greater detail and more targeted recommendations, sometimes for specific educational sectors, sometimes from a cross-sectoral perspective. Also in light of the changing circumstances, it is important to assess the extent to which these Communications were able to keep the ET 2020 framework relevant.



A small minority of interviewees from Member States indicated that they do not regard these Communications as being part of ET 2020, since Member State involvement in preparing these documents was in many cases low or absent. At the same time they acknowledge that some of these Communications have helped to stimulate the debate also at Member State level. Those involved in developing the Communications at EU level mentioned that indeed the Communications are a Commission initiative, however, outputs and insights drawn from the OMC were used. More importantly, Commission Communications are normally taken up at Council level, where Member States are involved.

Table 2.4 in Appendix A.7 shows a more detailed analysis of 15 key policy documents, and the extent to which they draw on the ET 2020 Council conclusions and Europe 2020. The table maps the objectives and priorities of ET 2020 with the objectives of 15 policy documents: Commission Communications, Council Declarations, Resolutions, Recommendations and Council Conclusions. Most texts are between five to a maximum of 15 pages.

Documents were assessed to understand the extent to which they refer to each of the strategic objectives of ET 2020, and a number of sub-themes. When no reference was made at all, the score is “0”. When a strong link was visible, a score of “2” was awarded. In some cases, when a Communication focussed almost exclusively on a certain theme (i.e. Adult education), a score of “3” was awarded.

When looking at the actual number of references made in the texts to ET 2020 and Europe 2020, most texts refer more to Europe 2020 than to ET 2020. This underscores ET 2020 as a platform that facilitates the work toward Europe 2020. References to both decline after the first two years, which may reflect a ‘learning curve’ where it is understood that work at the EU level is focused within the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Most topics defined under ET 2020 are ‘repeated’ in each document, thus leading to an almost identical total score (roughly between 17 and 23 points). Thus, the topics under ET 2020 have remained relevant, and were further developed in the past few years. Topics which score lower are: making mathematics, science and technology more attractive (STEM); strengthening linguistic competences; promote intercultural competences; implementation of national lifelong learning strategies; and, raising the level of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy.

It would not be acceptable simply to conclude that these topics became less important, or received less attention overall. In some cases that is true: for example on STEM, a number of country experts mentioned that a lot of work was done under ET 2010, and a lot of knowledge was shared already, thus limiting the need for further actions. Raising basic skills levels is a topic that has received increased attention only more recently. The focus on intercultural competences, democratic values, respect for fundamental rights and environment is mentioned in interviews as the underlying ‘raison d’être’ of education and training, to which other priorities contribute. It should therefore not come as a surprise that the policy initiatives do not focus on direct actions here. The topics receiving high scores were:

- Improve transitions between the various education and training sectors;
- Ensure high quality teaching, incl. teacher training;
- Broader learning communities, partnerships;
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- Promotion of evidence-based policy and practice; and
- Promote the acquisition of transversal key competences (i.e. digital skills, entrepreneurship).

Overall this analysis shows consistency between the Communications/Council conclusions (and therefore supported by MSs) and ET 2020. There is consistency in the underlying vision while each agenda focuses on slightly different priorities. There are no significant gaps, and there is a common attention for evolving priorities.

## Relevance for Europe 2020

The evolution towards a closer link with employment, jobs and growth, driven by the common framework of the Europe 2020 vision, is reflected in recent Communications and Council Conclusions. This coherence is mainly driven by the common framework of Europe 2020. The ET 2020 framework is regarded as the instrument supporting the implementation in terms of exchange between Member States and coordinating peer learning – in combination with the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes for financial support.

The 2012 Joint Report suggested to review the working arrangements under ET 2020 that were devised before Europe 2020 and the European Semester were agreed. ET 2020 should be better aligned with Europe 2020. And, it should be the mechanism to mobilise ET 2020 stakeholders, increase their ownership and harness their expertise in support of Europe 2020, drawing also on evidence and data from relevant European agencies and networks. In total five concrete changes to the governance and its working tools were introduced, to increase the contribution of ET 2020 to Europe 2020<sup>18</sup>. The first measure proposed was that 1) The Council (EYCS) could address the education and training dimension of Europe 2020 during both the European and national semester. In recent years, the Education Council has addressed European Semester issues on multiple occasions. It has resulted in several Education Council Conclusions, which are, according to European Commission staff, important guiding documents for the work that is undertaken under ET 2020:

- Council Conclusions on education and training in Europe 2020 – the contribution of education and training to economic recovery, growth and jobs (26/11/2012);
- Council Conclusions on investing in education and training - a response to Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes and the 2013 Annual Growth Survey (15/2/2013); and
- Council Conclusions on Efficient and Innovative Education and Training to Invest in Skills – supporting the 2014 European Semester (24/2/2014).

The Council conclusions of 26 November 2012 agreed that the education and training sector, including ministerial level, should play a more prominent role both in defining common approaches and objectives relating to education and training, as well as in implementing the education and training aspects of the European Semester of Europe 2020.

The Council conclusion of 15 February 2013 agreed that the EYCS Council, and the relevant preparatory bodies, should consider the progress made by Member States in responding to challenges identified in country-specific recommendations in the field of education and training. The Council notes the Commission's intention to step-up its country-specific and country-supportive expertise and its analytical capacity, as well as stronger co-ordination of the activities carried out by the OMC working groups. All such groups will focus on the key policy challenges identified through the ET 2020, Europe 2020 and European Semester process.

The Council conclusion of 24 February 2014 invites the Member States and the Commission to increase the added value and optimise the effectiveness of the ET 2020 strategic framework by: a) further developing cooperation between education and employment specialists; b) ensuring that the Open Method of Coordination, including the “ET 2020” Working Groups, effectively serve to assist in following up identified challenges; and, c) continuing voluntary high-level peer reviews in the context of existing OMC structures, focusing on the education and training aspects of country specific recommendations.

<sup>18</sup> The five measures include: 1) EYCS discussing Europe 2020, 2) Cooperation between Education Committee and EMCO, 3) Peer learning, 4) The annual Forum, 5) Monitoring. We refer to the functioning and effectiveness of these measures under EQ 2 and EQ 3

The evolution of ET 2020 towards a more focussed mechanism to support Europe 2020 and the European Semester is clearly visible from these Council conclusions. Increasing the level of political support, and improving the evidence base and focussing discussions around country specific recommendations, are clearly means to increase the relevance of ET 2020. The measures proposed have led to real actions that are a direct follow-up of these Council conclusions. Evaluation Questions 2 and 3 address the effectiveness of these measures.

### Relevance for the Youth Employment Package

The Youth Employment Package (YEP) is based on three identified problems:

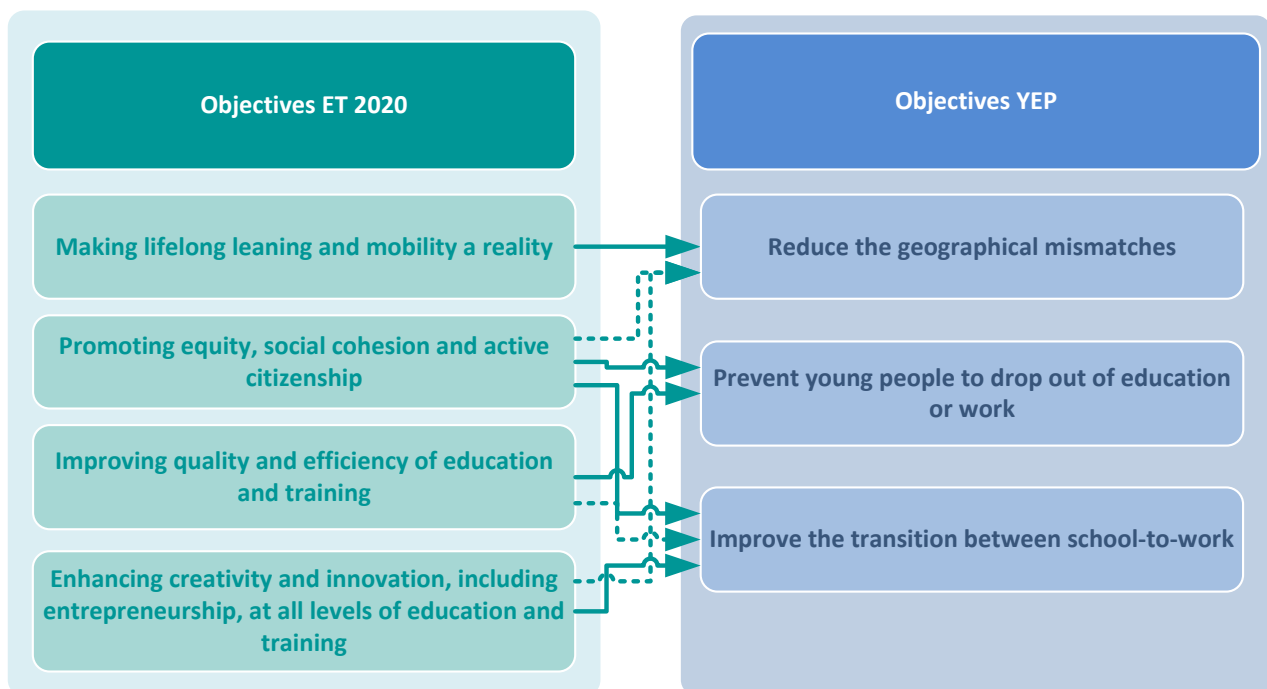
- Young people, particularly from disadvantaged groups, dropping out of education or work; rising long-term unemployment and inactivity;
- Difficult school-to-work transitions; and
- Substantial number of vacancies coexists with high unemployment rates, growing skills and geographical mismatches.

Reduction of these problems are the main goals of the Youth Employment Package and these objectives are addressed by:

- The establishment of the Youth Guarantee. This is a tool to ensure that young people receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education and an apprenticeship or traineeship within a certain time after leaving school or becoming unemployed;
- The increase of the supply of quality traineeships and apprenticeships; and
- The reduction of obstacles to mobility to allow companies to recruit workers, apprentices and trainees from other EU countries.

When looking at the goals of the YEP package, it is clear (Figure 2.2) that there are several strong relations with the goals of ET 2020.

**Figure 2.4 Relations between the objectives Lifelong learning and YEP**



The figure above shows that there are inter-linkages between the objectives of ET2020 and the identified problems and objectives of YEP.



The ET 2020 goal on lifelong learning and mobility, with the aim to develop national qualifications frameworks linked to the European Qualifications Framework and the application of the European Quality Charter for Mobility, directly relates to the YEP objective to reduce the obstacles to mobility, because the uneven recognition of qualifications is one of the obstacles for mobility. Hence, there is strong relevance of ET 2020 for the YEP.

Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship contributes to the objective to prevent young people to drop out of education or work, as the aim is to develop skills and competences that are needed for their employability. For the same reason, this objective relates strongly to improving the school-to-work transition. It also relates more indirectly to the objective of reducing geographical mismatches as it aims to enable all citizens to acquire and develop skills and competences for their employability. It also addresses educational disadvantage through high-quality inclusive education. Although this link is indirect, it will have an effect on the longer term; therefore this objective potentially contributes to a better regional match as the education level will be more tailored to the needs of the labour market.

Improving quality and efficiency of education and training contributes in particular to the YEP objective to prevent people dropping out of education or work, as it aims to develop key competences and to make training more attractive, and will help to keep people in the education system and make them attractive to employers. Furthermore, the development of key competences can contribute in the school-to-work transition.

Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training directly contributes to the school-to-work transition, as partnerships with enterprises and education is stimulated and competences of citizens are promoted. In this way the link between education and enterprise is strengthened. This objective also relates to the reduction of geographical mismatches, as it is expected that the cooperation between education and enterprises will also lead to a better match between education and demand.

YEP is implemented along three lines:

- **The Youth Guarantee schemes.** The term ‘Youth Guarantee’ refers to a situation in which young people receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. An offer of continued education could also encompass quality training programmes leading to a recognised vocational qualification. A Youth Guarantee Recommendation was formally adopted by the EU Council of Ministers on 22 April 2013 on the basis of a proposal made by the Commission in December 2012 and was endorsed by the June 2013 European Council. The schemes should cover:
  - Building up partnership-based approaches;
  - Early intervention and activation; and
  - Supportive measures for labour market integration Enhancing skills and Labour market related measures.

18 Youth Guarantee pilot projects were launched between August and December 2013 and each run for around 12 months.

- **Increase the supply of quality traineeships and apprenticeships.** Launching a second stage social partner consultation on a quality framework for traineeships, the set up a European alliance for Apprenticeships.
- **Reduction of obstacles to mobility to allow companies to recruit workers, apprentices and trainees from other EU countries.** The development of an integrated mobility set for young people, supported by the European Jobs Network (EURES). The purpose of EURES is to provide information, advice and recruitment/placement (job-matching) services for the benefit of workers and employers as well as any citizen wishing to benefit from the principle of the free movement of persons. It consists of the Job Mobility Portal and has a network of more than 850 EURES advisors that are in daily contact with jobseekers and employers across Europe.

When looking at the policy lines of the ET 2020, the following activities can (potentially) contribute to the actions under YEP:

- There is one-to-one relation between what is mentioned under YEP and under the **policy steering instruments**. The joint declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships an example of an innovative policy steering instrument is mentioned under the policy steering instruments of ET 2020 , which directly relates to the increase of the supply of quality traineeships and apprenticeships mentioned as a remedy under YEP. High Level expert group outcomes can contribute to YEP as well, if the subject is related to one of the issues under YEP. The same could be the case for policy steering conclusions following stakeholder engagement, for example a European youth organisation;
- **Peer learning and the exchange of good practice** among the Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) sectoral working groups, stakeholder involvement, expert groups and a range of peer learning activities (PLAs). This can contribute to all of the activities under YEP where groups addresses issues important for the Youth Guarantee, the Quality Framework for Traineeships and the Alliance for Apprenticeships, as well as the integrated mobility. Again, the extent to which there is a real contribution depends very much on the actual topics chosen under this activity;
- **Funding Programme work instruments.** This measure could also potentially contribute to the activities of the YEP, if the topics chosen relate to the Youth Guarantee schemes, the quality of traineeships and apprenticeships as well as to the reduction of obstacles to mobility. Again, this measure is so broad, that the final way it is implemented in terms of topics chosen determine whether there is a relevance for YEP; and
- **Common reference tools** can serve as inspiration for the activities under YEP and may even support them, depending on the actions chosen.

The coherence and relevance between ET 2020 and YEP was insured through inter-service consultations prior to the adoption of YEP in 2012. The December 2012 Communication of the Youth Employment Package, which also contained the proposal for the Youth Guarantee, was subject to inter-service consultation, where DG EAC ensured coherence with the existing framework of ET 2020. Specific pillars of the Youth Guarantee falling under the remit of DG EAC that were outlined in the 2012 Communication are: (i) routes to re-entering education and training for early school leavers; (ii) addressing skills mismatches and improving digital skills; and (iii) increased guidance on entrepreneurship and self-employment in schools.

Coherence of the Youth Guarantee was further ensured in the process of assessing Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans submitted by the Member States. These were analysed by all DGs involved in the European Semester Process, including DG EAC. The Commission evaluation contributed to the European Semester.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee further coherence was ensured by involving the ET 2020 Working Groups in the implementation and monitoring of the Youth Guarantee.

<sup>19</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1094&langId=en>

While the YEP is implemented under the coordination of the OMC of Employment, DG EAC and key stakeholders from the ET 2020 coordination staff were involved in the development of the package. In terms of solutions proposed, there are close linkages with education and training systems. This is confirmed by an analysis of the key document on YEP, which shows that in terms of themes addressed, there are multiple linkages with ET 2020.

The Youth Guarantee, calls for recognition of non-formally and informally acquired skills and more flexible learning pathways, among other things. It therefore links closely to ET 2020, and especially the efforts to develop a mutually recognised skills framework. In its focus on “new skills for new jobs” and transversal skills, it is coherent with the digital learning aspect of ET 2020 as well.

The Council of the European Union also encouraged stronger cooperation between the Education Committee and the Employment Committee in its Background Note from the Council Meeting in November 2012<sup>20</sup>. In May 2013, the Council urged the Commission and the Member States to “*utilise the financial support under the Youth Employment Initiative for the provision of targeted opportunities in higher education for disadvantaged or unemployed young people under the age of 25, in order to enable them to acquire employment-specific skills.*”<sup>21</sup> The Council thereby implicitly stated that the theme of higher education, coordinated under ET 2020, has a direct link to the YEP.

## **2.2 The ET 2020 strategic objectives, priority areas and the related Commission Communications and Council Conclusions are a relevant and coherent driving force in relation to European sectorial and transversal policy agendas (providing an overall rationale and purpose for education and training cooperation and reform). (JC 1.2)**

In this sub-section we consider the extent to which agendas being pursued in the varied sectors of education and training are mutually relevant to and coherent with the evolving ET 2020 and Europe 2020 priorities. The “Rethinking Education” Communication captured the essence of this relationship when it stated that:

*“The contribution of education and investment in skills to growth and jobs [should be] fully reflected in the European Semester. [The Commission] will use European platforms of dialogue such as the Open Method of Coordination in the field of Education and Training, the Bologna process for Higher Education and the Copenhagen process for VET as well as the funding instruments to stress the sense of urgency on the priorities identified here.”*<sup>22</sup>

This section begins by looking (Table 2.2) at the way in which the sectors of education and training are positioned differently in respect of European cooperation. It then examines the extent to which policy shapers are aware of the objectives and priorities of ET 2020 and Europe 2020, which is an essential prerequisite for ensuring that sector agendas are in line with the objectives and priorities. It then looks in more detail at the alignment between objectives, using documentary and interview evidence.

<sup>20</sup> CoEU. (2012). *Background note - 3201st EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE and SPORT Council meeting - Brussels, 26 and 27 November 2012*. Council of the European Union, November 21.

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/133649.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/133649.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> CoEU. (2013). *Council conclusions on the social dimension of higher education*. Council of The European Union, May 17. [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/137144.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/137144.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1389776578033&uri=CELEX:52012DC0669>

Understanding the sectoral differences is essential, in order to be able to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the various ET 2020 activities. There are a number of factors that explain the different degrees of progress in the different sectors:

- The **timing and history of cooperation** at EU level. Whereas VET and Higher Education have a long tradition of cooperation at EU level (for example through ACVT and mobility programmes), cooperation in the School sector is more recent (2008);
- The **level of regulation** at Member State level. Whereas Schools are highly regulated, in HE and VET there is more autonomy. The independence of universities towards their governments is an important aspect, and in VET often employers are involved, which makes VET-providers less dependent on the government.
- The **number of institutions** in each sector. As Dunbar's number suggests, a person can only maintain a maximum of 150 relationships. In Higher Education, the number of universities in most Member States is such, that the rector's of all universities can in principle meet each other personally. In many country there are rectors' conferences that play an important role in negotiating with the government. In VET this is the case to some degree. In School Education this is often impossible due to the high numbers of institutions. In Adult Learning, the types of providers are so diverse, that there not a single network that brings them all together.
- The **existence of other networks and bodies for cooperation** at EU level. In HE, the Bologna process has increased cooperation between institutions and policymakers. In VET, the Copenhagen process, but also EU organisations that represent the VET providers, have already established networks. That can help to disseminate the work done at EU level. And maybe to some extent it can limit the experienced "added value" of another working group at EU level.

Despite all these differences, ET 2020 does have Working groups and a wide range of OMC-activities for each sector.

**Table 2.3: Sectoral coverage of 15 Communications and Council Conclusions**

Timeline	Sep-10	Nov-10	Feb-11	May -11	June -11	Sep-11	Nov-11	Dec-11	Nov-12	Feb-13	May -13	July -13	Sep-13	Oct -13	Feb-14
Type of document	a	e	e	e	d	a	e	c	a	e	d	a	a	b	e
Document number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
References made															
References to ET 2020/ Strategic framework for cooperation / OMC*	2	3	1	3	3	1	1	5	2	3	0	1	1	1	3
References to Europe 2020*	14	12	16	3	9	7	3	8	1	6	2	5	2	0	3
<b>Sectors covered</b>															
(Pre) School Education				x	x						x				
VET	x				x						x			x	
Higher Education						x	x					x			
Adult Education								x							
All sectors/ Transversal focus		x	x						x	x			x		

For the full table, see the Appendix A.7

## 2.2.1 To what extent are the European sectorial agendas linked to the overall ET 2020 and Europe 2020 priorities to enable mutual relevance and coherence?

When looking from a sectoral perspective, the overview in [Table 2.2](#) shows that all sectors are covered in Commission Communications and Council Conclusions since 2010, and that there is a good balance of coverage. Besides a number of 'transversal' documents, there are specific communications around themes linked to specific sectors.

### Vocational Education & Training

Since 2002 policy in the **Vocational Education & Training** sector has been driven by the Copenhagen Process. Copenhagen is a Community process rooted in the Treaty. Already in 1957, the Treaty of Rome enabled the European Economic Community to have a policy on vocational training. Thus EU VET policy has a long history stretching back several decades. The need to coordinate VET policy with social partners has led to the establishment, already in 1964, of a formal body, the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training. The longer history of EU's involvement in VET policy, is also witnessed by the existence of two EU Agencies, CEDEFOP and ETF, which play an important role in supporting the Commission with developing the evidence base for VET policies.

In Vocational Education & Training there is clear relevance and coherence with the ET 2020 and Europe 2020 objectives. VET objectives and priorities were mapped against ET 2020 in the Bruges Communiqué in December 2010, using ET 2020 objectives as the organising framework. The results of the progress towards deliverables set out in the Bruges Communiqué for the period 2010-2012 were analysed and synthesised in a dedicated CEDEFOP Bruges monitoring report. They were then used in the Rethinking Education Communication to report on progress in the area of VET.

Many of the CSRs covering education and training deal with VET. This increases the need for coordination and cooperation with the Employment Committee and employment experts. The alignment between ET 2020 governing bodies (i.e. Working Group on VET, DG VT and HLG), ACVT and the Copenhagen process requires responsiveness and strong coordination of activities, to ensure that the ET 2020 activities are of added value to the existing initiatives.

### Higher Education

In **higher education** and in line with Europe 2020, both the intergovernmental Bologna Process and the EU's own modernisation agenda within the context of ET 2020, provide a strategic framework for cooperation between Member States. Two Communications (Modernisation Agenda for HE and European HE in the World) are specific for the higher education sector. There is strong relevance and coherence between ET 2020 and these Communications.

In HE, in addition to the cooperation with member States on the modernisation Agenda, there is the intergovernmental Bologna Process, established in 1999, involves 47 countries and the European Commission, as well as a number of consultative members, which establishes a work plan, with Ministerial level conferences every 2-3 years.

Adding the Bologna Process to the analysis, it is clear that the steering process for the higher education sector is driven by the same context and objectives as the ET 2020 strategy. There is coherence in the vision and this vision evolves in the same direction. This is illustrated by the adoption of the HE mobility benchmark, which was proposed by the Bologna process and later adopted by the Commission/Council to avoid having two different ones.

ET 2020 was referred to by the majority of interviewees as being a broader framework, with less concrete initiatives and outcomes than Bologna, but which allows a broad discussion, or as a peer exchange and learning tool to implement actions in line with Bologna. The objective of ET 2020 to find compatibility with the Bologna Process is thus well-appreciated. Overall, the Bologna process is considered of more influence on the structural reforms that have taken place in higher education (e.g. introducing the three-cycle degree

structure across Europe), while ET 2020 is considered of value for the broader cross-sector view and the wider range of activities in HE.

### Schools sector

By its nature, the **school sector** in Europe consists of many institutions, and the levels of autonomy differ widely. This makes any coordination and cooperation (being at national or EU level) challenging. At the same time, participation in school level programmes like Comenius has been high, and there is a large demand for taking part in Erasmus+. Often cooperation is very practical and involves students and teachers going abroad. At the policy level, many of the objectives and challenges identified in education and training systems, are related to the foundations that originate from the schools sector, thus making it a crucial and relevant sector. The analysis of CSRs shows that a number of policy issues related to the schools sector (Early School Leaving, Early Childhood Education and Care, Basic Skills), have increased significantly in the past 4 years.

In relation to the schools sector, two important Communications were presented, on Early School Leaving (ESL) and on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). In Europe 2020 early school leaving (ESL) is addressed as one of the headline targets, ensuring its central position in the policy actions related to education and training. Of the eight indicators and reference levels proposed under ET 2020 in 2009, three are related to the schools sector: Basic skills, Early Childhood Education and Care and Early School Leaving. Both “Rethinking Education” and “Opening up Education” include all E&T sectors, and thus school education. A clear majority of interviewees both at European and country level agreed that this increases the effectiveness of the ET 2020 processes in this field. ESL is fully taken into account in the European Semester and CSRs, and the working groups in the ET 2020 OMC now have a clear mandate to work in this field. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is also acknowledged as an important topic for policy. National governments were encouraged by the attention paid to it at EU level.

One of the first major Communications in the schools sector appeared in 2006 with a Communication on Teacher Education. In 2008 it was followed by “*Improving competences for the 21st Century: an Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools*”. In 2011 there were important Communications on Early Childhood Education and Care, and Early School Leaving, which both are closely related to the school sector. Furthermore, the Rethinking Education Communication of 2012 also put the emphasis on several actions related to school education such as supporting Europe's teachers, improving the performance of student groups with high risk of early school leaving and low basic skills, and putting in place high quality and accessible early childhood education and care.

Nevertheless, school education is a more sensitive policy area for national governments to commit to international cooperation. From the 10 case studies at Member State level, different opinions emerge. In some countries (Spain, Portugal), ET 2020 is called the main influential driver for change in the field of ESL. In Italy, information from the TWG on Teacher Professional Development is mentioned as inspiring changes for the improvement of quality and effectiveness of education and training. Other interviewees (Finland, Poland) do not identify this kind of impact on ESL, or school education in general in their country. Some (e.g. Netherlands, Finland) do not identify the value added of participating in the OMC on school education, when the focus is on addressing low performance in schools rather than encouraging high-level performance for all pupils.

### Adult learning

The **adult learning sector** is in its infancy in many parts of Europe, and while some countries have well-developed adult learning sectors, others do not. In all cases, the development of a coherent community is constrained by the fact that adult learning spans the full range of types and modes of learning. An important milestone was the *Revised EU agenda on Adult Learning* in 2011, created specifically in the framework of ET 2020. Implementation by Member States is supported by the appointment in each country of a National Coordinator for Adult Learning, funded by LLP/ Erasmus+. This Agenda is a key instrument for developing the adult learning sector in Member States.



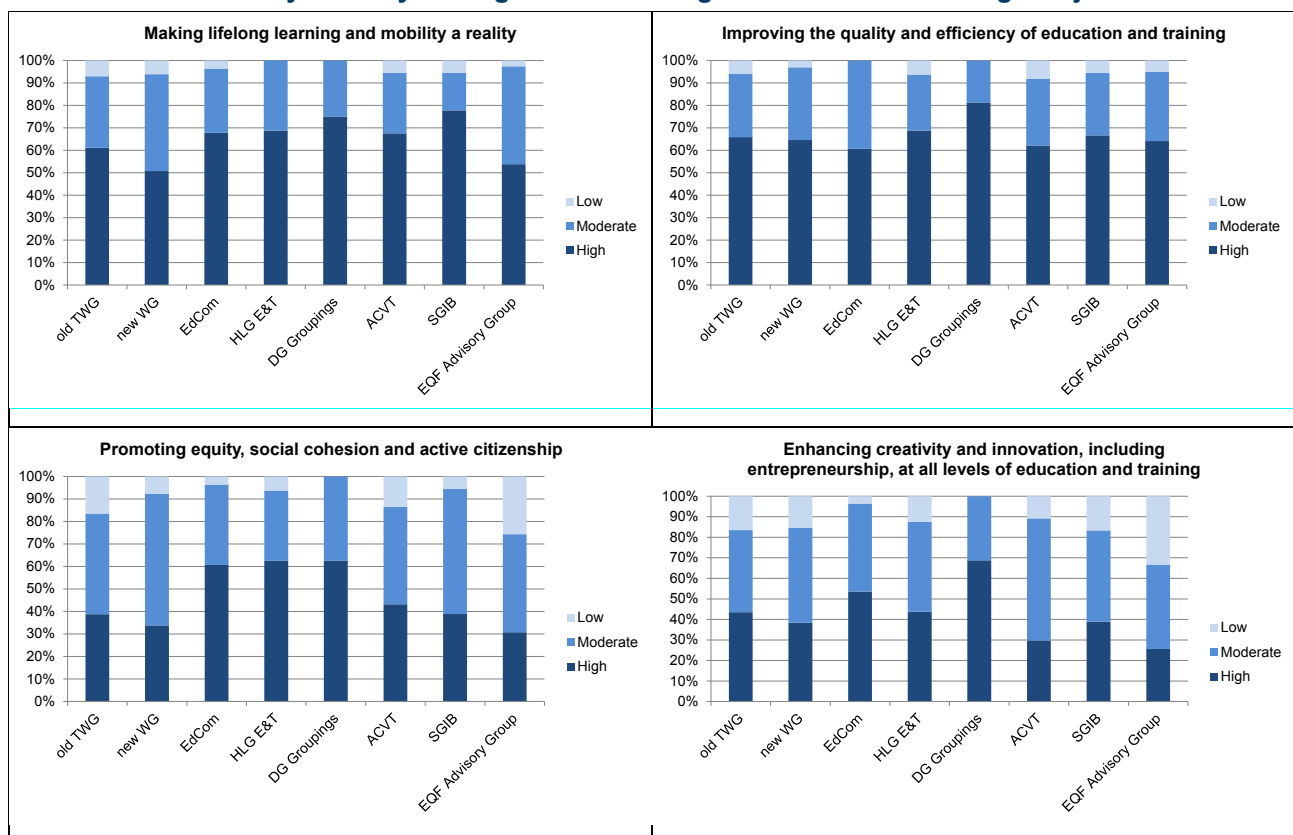
In adult learning the *Council Resolution on a Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning*<sup>23</sup> (2011) identifies priority areas that are linked to ET 2020 by “contributing to implementation of the four priorities of the ‘ET 2020’ strategic framework, in accordance with national contexts and legislation”, with reporting tied in to the ET 2020 cycle and the Joint Report.

## 2.2.2 To what extent are the European-level policy-shapers of the sectorial agendas (at EU and national levels) aware of the overall ET 2020 and Europe 2020 priorities?

Awareness amongst policy shapers of the objectives and priorities of ET 2020 and Europe 2020 is an essential prerequisite for ensuring that sectorial agendas are in line with ET 2020 objectives and priorities. Overall, it is clear from the e-survey that Steering Group and Working Group members have good levels of awareness of the strategic objectives of ET 2020, with 84% stating they have ‘moderate’ or ‘high’ awareness of all the objectives. Across the different groupings (Table 2.1), DG groupings report consistently high levels of awareness. This is important in the context of this judgement criterion, because DG groupings sit between the WGs and the formal governance structures, and this confirms that they are well equipped on terms of their knowledge of ET 2020. Awareness is also high amongst members of the High Level Group and the Education Committee.

Results for members of the ACVT and EQF Advisory Group, are more variable. They are low especially in relation to objectives on equity and creativity and innovation. This may reflect the more specific focus of these groups. It also highlights again just how consistently well informed are members of the DG groupings, the High Level Group, and Education Committee (Table 2.3).

**Table 2.4 How would you rate your degree of knowledge of the ET 2020 strategic objectives?**



<sup>23</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:372:0001:0006:EN:PDF>

At the specific sector level, the majority of interviewees indicated that national policy makers in the different fields report that their national policies are in line with, and are influenced by, the European level agenda. There is variation across Member States, and in some countries policy makers were not aware of whether, and to what extent, their daily work relates to ET 2020, or what types of initiatives respond to ET 2020. Other countries (e.g. Italy, Finland) indicated high and detailed awareness at sectoral level. In addition, awareness decreased as the actors move from those who participate in the process, to other national policy makers, institutes or to practitioners in the field.

## 3.0 EQ2 Overall Effectiveness of ET 2020

*EQ2 To what extent have the objectives of ET 2020 been achieved at the European and national level, thus fostering the modernisation of the education and training systems of the Member States?*

The section provides an assessment of the effectiveness of ET 2020, particularly focussing on the extent to which the framework has fostered the modernisation of education and training systems in Member States. The section responds to Evaluation Question 2 which addresses the effectiveness, benefits and impacts of ET 2020, whilst being less focused on the governance and process aspects which are the subject of other EQs. Effectiveness of ET 2020 is particularly judged in terms of the outputs from ET 2020, and their ability to lead to change in MS policy.

The effectiveness of ET 2020 is evaluated in the context of the following judgment criteria:

- JC 2.1 ET 2020 deliverables are effective and efficient in fostering sustainable national reform in the education and training systems of the Member States;
- JC 2.2 The deliverables of ET 2020 have been relevant to and effectively used by the Member States in their national process of reform in education and training;
- JC 2.3 ET 2020 has been an important factor contributing to stimulating modernisation in education and training; and
- JC 2.4 There is clear overall added value resulting from ET 2020 policy cooperation and decision-making and from the ET 2020 instruments/measures, compared to what could be achieved by Member States individually at national or regional level.

Evaluation Question 2 is a meta-level one which will draw together and synthesise the achievements of ET 2020. Hence, with regards to the evidence sources there is some overlap with Evaluation Questions 3 and 4 (below). However, for the sake of clarity, and in line with the Terms of Reference, we only summarise some of the evidence in this section whilst leaving the more detailed analysis around delivery models for later sections of the report (rather than bringing them in at this point and repeating them again at a later stage).

Importantly, it is at Member State-level that ‘real’ results and impacts on education and training systems are registered. Indeed, EU level outputs from ET 2020 become the inputs to change at national/regional level (depending on the level at which there is competence in education and training). Furthermore, within each Member State there is a specific chain from inputs to impacts which will influence the extent to which ET 2020 delivers modernisation ‘on the ground’. For this reason, the country level research has been a key source of evidence for this Evaluation Question.

This chapter starts with an overview of the general effectiveness of ET 2020 deliverables before including a more systematic review of the effectiveness of different ET 2020 activities and deliverables linked to four main ‘activity types’. The activity types group the array of different ET 2020 activities, outputs, methods and deliverables (both tangible and intangible). Grouping the work of ET 2020 into these broader blocks of activity helps to better understand what types of activities have and have not been effective, and helps to identify the critical success factors that make certain activities more effective than others.

Table 3.1 provides a description of the main activity types that form the basis of this chapter, along with their respective outputs.

**Table 3.1 Activity Types**

Activity Type	Examples of outputs
<b>Major Policy Steering instruments</b>	The work of WGs, work of the higher level groups, annual peer reviews, in depth country workshops and other various events, conferences and meetings
<b>Specific guidance for MS reform</b>	CSRs, Council Conclusions/ Recommendations / joint declarations Commission Communications/
<b>Analytical and statistical activities</b>	Research reports, ET Monitor and other studies commissioned through ET 2020 activities
<b>Tools</b>	Various tools linked to transparency (European Framework of key competences, European Qualification Framework etc).

For each of these activity types, there is a short description of the outputs that fall under the main headings, with an assessment of the effectiveness of the outputs, and the critical success factors that have led to an effective or less effective outcome.

#### Summary Answer: EQ2 on overall effectiveness of ET 2020

ET 2020 has produced a range of tangible deliverables related to reports, handbooks, research documents, good practice guides and tools that have provided both strategic and 'practical' outputs for European education and training stakeholders. ET 2020 has also produced less tangible, but equally important outputs linked to meetings, seminars, conferences and events which again have the underlying objective of improving the development of education and training agendas across Europe. The interim evaluation has shown that these deliverables have largely been well received by those undertaking the e-survey as well as interviewees from the Member State case studies. There is no also doubt that many of these deliverables are referenced in numerous education and training policy and practice across Europe meaning they in some way have influenced, guided or inspired policy and practice.

Deliverables and materials which provided 'practical' advice and guidance and also those that related to Member State level support (that were specific rather than general) were often highlighted as being most useful ET 2020 deliverables by Member State level stakeholders. In overall terms, ET 2020 deliverables often had three main roles:

- Better equipping Member States to identify and understand national problems linked to education and training. This particularly included helping stakeholders in MS to gather data and statistics to help them develop stronger evidence bases. Member State level stakeholders often highlighted various outputs of ET 2020 in terms of research and studies which helped develop stronger evidence to understand and 'make sense' of an array of problems and issues linked to their education and training national agenda;
- Helping Member States to design solutions based on good practice and peer learning. Country level stakeholders highlighted various examples of how ET 2020 helped them develop new initiatives or strengthen existing activities linked to education and training in their Member State, through peer learning, the exchange of knowledge with stakeholders outside their Member State and the development of good practice; and
- Accelerating learning through stimulating transnational dialogue across Member State borders on a wide range of issues and solutions linked to education and training. In particular, stakeholders directly involved with ET 2020 who undertook the e-survey often cited the direct benefits of peer learning from other Member States in order to strengthen existing activity or develop new activity to tackle various issues. This led stakeholders to highlight the 'acceleration' of learning as a key added value of ET 2020.

'National' as well as EU drivers were often seen as being prominent when it came to the overall reform process at Member State level. When stakeholders in the country level research were asked to explain the 'impact' of ET 2020 deliverables on how national policy and practice is developed and reformed, they tended to refer to it as one of a number of issues they considered when developing new or improving existing practice. Member State level stakeholders generally felt that ET 2020 made a contribution to changing and influencing policy and practice but that the actual reform of education and training policy and laws in their Member State was driven by a wide and often complex number of factors, including the needs, policies and priorities at national level.

### **3.1 ET 2020 is effective and efficient in fostering sustainable national reform**

Before going into more detail on the effectiveness of the four activity types mentioned above, the chapter provides an overview of desk research, and then communicates the views of ET 2020 stakeholders about the overall effectiveness of ET 2020. Although this initial analysis is partly based on personal opinion of the 571 people (151 through the stakeholder interviews and 420 via the e-survey) it is still important and useful to present in the evaluation report as these large number of stakeholders have either directly been involved in the ET 2020 process (e.g. have actually attended TWGs) or they have often 'used' the deliverables which ET 2020 has generated (e.g. have utilised the results of research reports or tools generated through ET 2020 activities). This means they are well placed to form an opinion on effectiveness.

As part of the desk research stage of the evaluation the key education and training strategies of the ten Member States in the country level research, were systematically reviewed to understand how they referred to ET 2020. The desk based exercise looked at the key objectives of the national strategies and Action Plans, any key priorities or goals (where they were given) as well as whether Europe 2020 and specifically ET 2020 objectives and deliverables were referenced.

The desk research showed that ET 2020 is often referenced in a range of documents including Action Plans, Strategies and Policy documents linked to the education and training agenda across Member States. The desk review (Table 3-2) of strategies linked to education and training at Member State level identified specific references to ET 2020, examples of which were:

**Table 3-2: Examples of references to ET 2020 in Member State policy documents**

Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 2011 Spanish national report '<i>Overcoming school failure: policies that work</i>'<sup>24</sup> specifically mentions the commitment of Spain to the ET 2020 Strategic Framework through 150 measures;</li> <li>• In Portugal, the preamble of the legislation introducing short technical courses at polytechnics<sup>25</sup>, established in March 2014, refers to ET 2020 outcomes as a key driver of the need for change;</li> <li>• In Italy, the National Operational Programme on education<sup>26</sup> uses two benchmarks of ET 2020 (early school leaving and basic skills competences) as a key reference point when putting forward aims, objectives and practical solutions;</li> <li>• The report "<i>Open school on Europe and the world</i>" of the French Law of re-foundation of Schools (2013)<sup>27</sup> refers explicitly to ET 2020 objectives when elaborating French aims and objectives;</li> <li>• Early School leaving Action Plans and Strategies in Germany, Finland and Poland all note the importance ET 2020 places on achieving a reduction (at the EU and Member State level) of instances of ESL (these are explained in more detail later in this section);</li> <li>• At a regional level, the Spanish Autonomous Communities refer to ET 2020 objectives and indicators in various policy documents. For example, ET 2020 objectives are fully integrated into the Basque Country Professional Training Plan<sup>28</sup>, and appears in the Basque University Plan<sup>29</sup>. Andalusia refers to ET 2020 outcomes in a pre-law report from 2012 for an upcoming law on education<sup>30</sup>.</li> </ul>

Source: Ecorys desk research

The fact that the desk based review found that ET 2020 is referenced in a number of key national strategies, policies and action plans, is an indication of ET 2020 contributing directly to the education and training policy development process in Member States. It also shows that the profile of ET 2020 is strong amongst national stakeholders who develop various strategies and action plans at the Member State level.

However, the extent to which ET 2020 actually informs the content of these strategies is less clear from the desk research alone. The majority of strategies reviewed through the desk research undertaken by the evaluators tend to mention that they are 'in line' with ET 2020 priorities, or state they are 'committed' to ET 2020 objectives, rather than stating how the content of the strategy or Action Plan was influenced, guided or inspired by different ET 2020 deliverables. At the same time, whether key Member State strategies or plans mention ET 2020 is not always a true reflection of the extent to which ET 2020 is being effective in fostering sustainable national reform. Documents may have in some way been influenced by ET 2020 but not then reference it, and we cannot know how common this is. The e-survey results and the stakeholder interviews at the Member State level shed more light on this issue which are set out later in this chapter when we identify effectiveness broken down by different activity types.

### 3.1.1 Use of materials to support national reform

The results from the e-survey provide additional evidence on the degree to which ET 2020 has influenced national reform. The graphs below examine this. Figure 3.1 summarises the responses to an overall question on the extent to which ET 2020 deliverables help Member States reform education and training laws and policies. One fifth of respondents stated they were not used at all, and 29% stated they were used to a large extent or very much. Half stated that the materials were useful to a limited extent.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/48631820.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <http://dre.pt/pdf1sdip/2014/03/05400/0207402081.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> [http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/pon/in\\_chiaro](http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/pon/in_chiaro)

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000027677984&dateTexte&categorieLien=id>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.lanbideheziketa.euskadi.net/es/book.php> and <http://content.yudu.com/A1to7y/planfp/resources/74.htm>





<sup>29</sup> <http://www.hezkuntza.ejgv.euskadi.net/r43->

[573/es/contenidos/informacion/dia3/es\\_2024/adjuntos/plan\\_uni\\_2011\\_2014\\_c.pdf](http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/mantenimiento/index.html)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/mantenimiento/index.html>



**Figure 3.1 To what extent were you able to make practical use of ET 2020 materials at national level to effectively reform education and training laws and policies?**

Response	% of responses	%
1 Not at all		19 %
2 To a limited extent		52 %
3 To a large extent		21 %
4 Very much		8 %

Source: e-survey of combined SG and WG respondents

When stakeholders in the country level research were asked to explain the ‘impact’ of ET 2020 deliverables on how national policy and practice is developed and reformed, they tended to refer to it as one of a number of issues they considered when developing new or improving existing practice. Country level stakeholders generally responded that ET 2020 can certainly make a contribution to changing and influencing policy and practice (a point dealt with in more detail below) but that the actual reform of education and training policy and laws in their Member State was driven by a wide and often complex set of factors.

The factors do include ET 2020, but many of the key drivers identified related to national issues, including national political will, national research reports (that do not link with ET 2020 processes directly), the actual needs of sectors and stakeholders involved in education and training, the levels of available funding, and the level of priority that education and training issues currently have in a Member State (particularly over issues seen as being more ‘urgent’ such as the economy and short-term job creation).

In addition, the actual need for change (for example identified by the current state and performance of education and training provision in a Member State, and the performance of the country in international tests such as PISA) was also seen as a key factor driver along with the ability for reform, particularly the levels of funding available to support larger scale reform (rather than smaller scale changes) recognising that, for example, to improve HE institutions across a Member State would take relatively significant levels of funding.

It was difficult for stakeholders taking part in the country level research as well as those interviewed at the EU level to pinpoint the extent to which ET 2020 was any more or less important than other drivers of reform, but ‘national’ rather than EU drivers were often seen as being prominent when it came to the overall reform process. External drivers outside of ET 2020 that affect national reform are described in more detail in the next sub-section. While the e-survey shows that most respondents felt that deliverables had been useful in a practical way to some degree to help reform national laws and policies, it also demonstrates that ET 2020 deliverables are having more subtle impacts on helping Member States.

The figures that follow provide results combined across Working and Steering Group respondents.

**Figure 3.2 Overall, to what extent do you think that in your national policy/institutional context the deliverables of ET 2020 have contributed to policy discussions**

Response	% of responses	%
1 Not at all		4 %
2 Rather not		6 %
3 Somewhat		53 %
4 Very much		31 %
5 I don't know/can't answer		6 %

**Figure 3.3 Overall, to what extent do you think that in your national policy/institutional context the deliverables of ET 2020 have helped to shape policy**

Response	% of responses	%
1 Not at all		5 %
2 Rather not		15 %
3 Somewhat		51 %
4 Very much		22 %
5 I don't know/can't answer		7 %

**Figure 3.4 Overall, to what extent do you think that in your national policy/institutional context the deliverables of ET 2020 have led to the introduction of new practices**

Response	% of responses	%
1 Not at all		7 %
2 Rather not		21 %
3 Somewhat		47 %
4 Very much		17 %
5 I don't know/can't answer		8 %

**Figure 3.5 Overall, to what extent do you think that in your national policy/institutional context the deliverables of ET 2020 have led to improvement of existing practices**






Response	% of responses	%
1 Not at all		5 %
2 Rather not		14 %
3 Somewhat		48 %
4 Very much		25 %
5 I don't know/can't answer		8 %

These results show that a majority of respondents have found ET 2020 deliverables to be influential to some degree on both policy and practice. Further, the results point to small but important differences in the way in which ET 2020 has an effect, notably that ET 2020 deliverables:






- Are rather more likely to affect discussions about policy (84% stated that deliverables had somewhat or very much contributed) than policy itself (73%); and
- Are more likely to shape improvements in existing practices (73%) than the introduction of new practices (64%).

In MS policy development ET 2020 is one of a number of influences, so whilst ET 2020 outputs might contribute to policy discussions, they may not explicitly 'make it through' to policy outcomes. In terms of practice, one factor that may be important is that it is easier to make changes to existing practices than introduce new ones.






**Figure 3.6 Overall, to what extent do you think that in your national policy/institutional context the deliverables of ET 2020 have contributed to policy discussions**

Response	% of responses	%
1 Not at all		4 %
2 Rather not		6 %
3 Somewhat		53 %
4 Very much		31 %
5 I don't know/can't answer		6 %

**Figure 3.7 Overall, to what extent do you think that in your national policy/institutional context the deliverables of ET 2020 have helped to shape policy**

Response	% of responses	%
1 Not at all		5 %
2 Rather not		15 %
3 Somewhat		51 %
4 Very much		22 %
5 I don't know/can't answer		7 %

**Figure 3.8 Overall, to what extent do you think that in your national policy/institutional context the deliverables of ET 2020 have led to the introduction of new practices**

Response	% of responses	%
1 Not at all		7 %
2 Rather not		21 %
3 Somewhat		47 %
4 Very much		17 %
5 I don't know/can't answer		8 %

**Figure 3.9 Overall, to what extent do you think that in your national policy/institutional context the deliverables of ET 2020 have led to improvement of existing practices**

Response	% of responses	%
1 Not at all		5 %
2 Rather not		14 %
3 Somewhat		48 %
4 Very much		25 %
5 I don't know/can't answer		8 %

## 3.2 Effectiveness of different types of ET 2020 Activities

The following sub-sections provide deeper analysis broken down by the four activity types, exploring what types of ET 2020 activities are more effective, and identifying critical success factors:

- Activity Type 1: Major Policy Steering instruments;
- Activity Type 2: Specific guidance for MS reform;
- Activity Type 3: Analytical and statistical activities; and
- Activity Type 4: Tools.

### 3.2.1 Activity type 1: Peer learning and the exchange of good practice

Activities linked to ET 2020 that fall under this activity type concern work that helps stimulate learning and knowledge exchange across a range of different themes and subjects linked to education and training. In order to stimulate reform within Member States the ET 2020 framework has undertaken a broad range of these types of activities including TWGs, Higher Level Groups, Annual Peer Reviews, in-depth country workshops and other various events, conferences and meetings. Please note that this sub-section is focussed on understanding the effectiveness of these types of activities rather than describing in detail the activities themselves which is part of the chapter of EQ1 and 3.

#### 3.2.1.1 Assessment of Effectiveness

The effectiveness of ET 2020 deliverables linked to peer learning and the exchange of good practice fall under a number of key areas, evaluated through a desk-based assessment of the outputs of peer learning activity (i.e. meeting notes, agendas, reports etc.), and the views of those stakeholders who participated in the ET 2020 activities. The opinions of the target audience of peer learning and good practice activities as well as those who actually took part in peer learning activity itself are therefore valid and are worth close consideration in the evaluation process.

The main benefits of ET 2020 activity falling under peer learning and the exchange of good practice were:

- **Stimulation of discussion and debate among practitioners**

Participants in peer learning activities, who were interviewed as part of the interim evaluation, emphasises the value in bringing multiple players from across the EU together to discuss and debate education and training issues on a face-to-face basis. This interaction helped create new working relationships, brought together different types of stakeholders to discuss a particular issue (i.e. bringing strategy, project and sometimes beneficiaries together in 'one place'), and helped Member States understand how other countries were addressing a particular problem. Doing this in an interactive and personal way was often seen as being more useful than just having written outputs, as it allowed for debate and mutual support. For example, the desk research across TWG minutes and reports (where available) showed that attendees were often from a range of different levels, organisations, countries and represented strategic, operational and practitioner viewpoints. This variety was seen to provide a strong impetus for debate and discussion. Interviewees attending the TWG also tended to say that the groups provided 'new' relationships as they tended to bring together stakeholders who had not met nor worked with each other before.

- **Stimulating action**

Although peer learning helped generate more face-to-face interaction regarding issues linked to education and training, there was more mixed success with the meetings stimulating actual policy action. Examples found in Table 3.3 are drawn from a desk based review of meeting notes of TWGs, HLGs and peer reviews (where available). They provide specific examples of how this type of activity coming from ET 2020 has influenced certain aspects of policy and practice linked to education and training 'on the ground'.

**Table 3.3 Examples of influence of ET 2020 through peer learning and good practice**

Influence of ET 2020 through peer learning and good practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction of a new VET system in Spain in 2012, which used training 'within' employers more than previously, is based on good practice developed from the relevant TWG. The TWG provided a range of discussions, research reports and good practice examples of how other countries encouraged employers to train their staff rather than relying on 'educational establishments' to undertake the training. These were used by the Spanish stakeholders when designing more employer-led training activity within the Member State.</li> <li>• The introduction of a stronger monitoring system in France on ESL (to track those at most risk of leaving school early) which was partly stimulated by peer learning at the TWG, as well as discussions at the annual peer reviews. France used the good practice from various tools and outputs when developing more robust data on issues connected to ESL and second chance education<sup>31</sup>.</li> <li>• The PLA on 'how can investment in Adult learning be made smarter?' brought together peer learning and experiences from BE, DE, HR, IE, LV, LT, PL, SE, SK, UK and CH to debate the best actions that countries can take to provide appropriate funding, and enable more effective use of finance to promote adult learning.</li> <li>• The TWG on Entrepreneurial Education<sup>32</sup> (in cooperation with the OECD) developed Entrepreneurship360 which is a self-assessment tool for schools and VET institutions to help judge the entrepreneurial capabilities and further steps for development. This was based on good practice from various Member State experiences.</li> </ul>

Source: Ecorys analysis based on desk research and feedback from Member States involved in the country level analysis

<sup>31</sup> including [http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2013/second-chance\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2013/second-chance_en.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/regional/leed/entrepreneurship360call.htm>

However a typical and cited weakness of the peer learning activity was around a lack of ‘action’ and ‘follow up’ coming from the various meetings and events which took place. Many stakeholders at the country level who actually took part in these activities stated that a lack of follow up after the events was the main issue which affected their overall success. Although the peer learning exercise itself was often strong, the follow-up and the application of learning that was developed through the activity was seen as a key issue to consider. It was important that the Peer Learning (whether the TWGs, HLG, Annual Peer Reviews and other meetings/ events) activities were effectively documented, with reports or other written outputs documenting an activity. However, the desk research from the notes of the TWGs, Annual Peer Reviews and the HLGs (where available) showed that there was a range of quality, depth and volume of material, and that there was no systematic approach across WGs to follow up to stimulate some form of continuation of the debate. This issue is dealt with in more detail in the critical success factors set out below. Good practice around this issue was found in the ESL TWG and also the Annual ET 2020 peer reviews. Firstly both had a record of each meeting and secondly both identified a series of ‘action points’ that helped stimulate work and progress after each session with specific names and/ or organisations given on who should take forward the action (often including a note on how this action should and was followed up to track its implementation).

- **Effectively disseminating information and good practice**

Another key benefit of peer learning and the exchange of good practice related to how the method directly disseminated information to different stakeholders through presentations and discussions, rather than relying on information being read by stakeholders. The TWG on Professional Development of VET Trainers highlighted practical solutions and methodological tools to inspire Member States to learn from good practice from nine MS. This group produced a series of outputs that were used in annual peer reviews to present findings and conclusions in an interactive manner, for example through workshops and video conferencing. Although it was difficult for those involved to state how many people attended those events, participants felt them to have much more impact on those who attended the peer learning event compared to disseminating a written report and hoping that stakeholders would read and digest its findings.

### 3.2.1.2 *Differences between various peer learning methods.*

Although there are a series of more general benefits of ET 2020 activity found within activity linked to peer learning and the exchange of good practice, the interim evaluation also highlighted more specific issues related to the different types of peer learning which ET 2020 stimulates. These are dealt with in more detail in the EQ on delivery models (EQ 1 and EQ3) so the main strengths and weaknesses are dealt with in summary format below. The findings presented below (Table 3.4) have again been generated through desk-based assessments of the notes, minutes, reports and other written outputs associated with each type of peer learning as well as interviews with those stakeholders who have attended each group.

**Table 3.4 Strengths and Weaknesses of different forms of peer learning undertaken through ET 2020**

Peer learning method	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>TWG</b>	<p>The on-going nature of TWGs provided strong continuity compared to one-off peer learning. This encouraged more of a continuous ‘programme’ of items and activity to be undertaken which in turn helped more benefits and achievements.</p> <p>Membership generally remained stable and stronger working relationships were formed because of this continuity.</p> <p>TWGs have so far dealt with a wide and varied range of different issues falling under the specific theme of the group (e.g. HE modernisation).</p>	<p>Many of the weaknesses of the ‘old’ generation of TWGs have been addressed, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was no formal reporting requirements, other than a fiche describing the outputs. The fiche tended to provide limited information on discussions and benefits/ impacts of the TWGs.</li> <li>• There was often a lack of clarity around how the work of the TWGs linked with the CSRs. This means the overall purpose of some TWGs was less clear.</li> </ul>



Peer learning method	Strengths	Weaknesses
	This meant that each group could delve in more detail on a range of different issues and drivers linked to their theme.	
<b>Higher level working groups</b>	<p>The independent nature of the groups was seen as a key strength. The groups could provide more impartial, unbiased and neutral support to Member States and other organisations with no 'political' representation. This led to more honest assessments across a range of different issues.</p> <p>The level of expertise on these groups was genuinely high. The experts were generally well received and the seniority of officials in attendance helped ensure that the outcomes of the groups was action focussed but also that the actions were more likely to be implemented and followed up.</p> <p>Each HLG produced a report and/ or some written output which again was generally high quality and dealt with the issues in detail and were practical in nature.</p>	<p>Dissemination of key reports was highlighted by stakeholders taking part in the e-survey and the country level research as being mixed. Some written outputs from these groups were well disseminated and shared and are available freely whilst other were only shared with a small number of stakeholders directly attending the HLGs.</p> <p>There was a few observations from those attending the groups that discussions were too 'strategic' and high level and, compared to the work of the TWGs and the Peer Reviews the HLGs have less practical advice and guidance about actions for practitioners.</p>
<b>Annual ET 2020 peer reviews</b>	<p>Annual Peer Reviews allowed Member States CSR's to be constructively reviewed by other Member States and to identify (together in an inclusive way) approaches to addressing certain challenges. This allowed the 'reviewed' Member States to benefit, and the 'reviewing' Member States also benefitted by being able to draw lessons from the policy measures presented.</p> <p>The level of detail on the suggestions linked to dealing with CSRs was is a strength of the Peer Reviews. Instead of general and higher level suggestions, specific and practical tasks and actions were put forward that the 'reviewed' Member State could more easily take forward.</p>	<p>Participation to the reviews was on an voluntary basis. Although this meant it was potentially more inclusive, the voluntary aspect of the reviews meant there was less formal structure in terms of who and how many stakeholders actually attended.</p> <p>The nature of the peer reviews tended to be 'one-off' events. Although these gave strong initial inputs, the follow-up and continuation of the support is important to focus on so that the initial impetus is not lost.</p>

### 3.2.1.3 *Critical success factors*

This sub-section provides a series of critical success factors relating to activities falling under the peer learning and exchange of good practice activity. The factors have been generated through desk-based analysis of the outputs generated through ET 2020 which fall under the peer learning and good practice activity type, as well as an assessment of these outputs from those stakeholders in Member States that have used them on the ground: for example, the experiences and views of the people who attended the Peer Learning Events, Annual Peer Reviews, HLG etc., who were asked why certain activities were more useful than others. The critical success factors identified are as follows:

- **Face-to-face interaction**

The face-to-face interaction between different stakeholders from across Europe was comprehensively highlighted as the main critical success factor of this type of activity. More specifically, factors which made the interaction most useful were related to having a mix of stakeholders attend certain meetings (i.e. not just policy makers but also practitioners), ensuring that there was plenty of room in the agenda to encourage more informal interaction, rather than relying on, for instance on a single workshop, and ensuring that the most relevant participants attended (i.e. where relevant, that key policy makers attended rather than their 'deputies' or more junior staff).

- **Grouping Member States together**

Peer learning activities which included all Member States, or where a significant number of the EU28 were present, were seen as less effective than when similar 'groups' of Member States were brought together. Peer reviews between countries who had similar issues, systems and approaches to certain education and training issues, helped stimulate a better understanding of the issues the 'reviewed' country needed support on, as well as helping put forward more practical suggestions for improvement based on similar experiences and similar conditions elsewhere. For example, there was work undertaken by Hungary and Romania working together in a 'peer counselling' activity to develop solutions at lengthening compulsory education. The work these two 'similar' countries provided to each other was seen as more productive and relevant than the peer support provided by older Member States.

- **Action-based**

An action-based approach to peer learning and good practice sharing was frequently mentioned as a critical success factor. Where good practice was simply 'shared' in a passive way the stakeholders were less able to apply the learning to their own situations. Good practice which therefore consisted only of case study descriptions, without any implications for policy and practice or key 'learning points' to consider, were seen to be less effective. As mentioned earlier, the work of the Higher Level Groups were seen as being particularly useful in this respect and an area other peer learning techniques and methods could learn from.

- **Practical advice**

Linked to the above critical success factor were issues linked to providing Member States with practical rather than strategic or sometimes 'theoretical' advice. Peer learning which provided 'real' advice on how to tackle an issue, rather than discursive or higher level thoughts on the issue, were much more appreciated by those Member States being supported. For example, Portuguese and Latvian stakeholders highlighted a number of diverse and practical measures to prevent early school leaving which was, in part, stimulated by TWGs. These included the 'One more class' national programme in Portugal and the KUTSE Program in Latvia. The former of these projects works with pupils at risk of early school leaving (before they re-join their original class) as well as helping develop a database which was drawn from 'practical' good practice in other countries that tracks educational pathways across schools in order to better target those at risk of early school leaving. The TWG on ESL produced a practical 'checklist' which was used by Member States to self-assess themselves against various issues linked to the ESL agenda.

- **Dissemination beyond those directly involved in the learning**

A key critical success factor highlighted by those taking part in the different peer learning activities linked to ET 2020 was around dissemination beyond those directly involved in the peer learning activity themselves. Dissemination work that stimulated organisational learning rather than simply individual learning was unevenly evident across the WGs. Peer learning activity tended to rely on those directly involved in meetings to disseminate various reports and other outputs 'downwards or outwards', meaning there was little understanding overall whether outputs went beyond those who directly benefitted from peer learning activity.

- **Ensuring meetings/ events and conferences linked to peer learning are well documented**

As noted above, those peer learning activities which had clear notes, minutes, reports and other written outcomes were seen to be the most effective. Even if the peer learning event or meeting in itself was seen as being a success, the lessons remain with the participants unless the main findings, discussion points, advice was not documented and shared more widely. The desk research again showed that there was a mix of quality and availability of the different types of peer learning that has taken place.

### 3.2.2 Activity Type 2: Major Policy Steering Instruments for Member State reform

Activity falling under the second activity type relates to specific guidance, advice or support on policy development aimed at helping stimulate reform in Member States. These major policy instruments relate to those that were formally adopted by the EU institutions and Member States and have an overall aim of steering changes, improvements and developments of various Member State policies within the education and training agenda. Activities which are discussed under this activity type include Council conclusions/ Commission Communications/ Recommendations as well as joint declarations. CSRs (which, although not formally part of ET 2020, are a key instrument in terms of policy steering) are also discussed. Please note that this section deals with EQ2 and therefore provides an assessment of the effectiveness of these activities rather than a detailed description of them.

#### 3.2.2.1 *Assessment of Effectiveness*

The e-survey, desk research and interviews with stakeholders undertaken through the interim evaluation have found that the main issues around the effectiveness of policy instruments were as follows:

- the more specific and the less 'general and overarching' the policy instruments were the better. The main observation was that policy steering instruments including Commission Communications and to a lesser extent Joint declarations were more 'general', and that they would have benefitted from being more tailored to the needs of different and specific countries. CSRs (and supporting activities such as Peer Reviews) as well as Council Conclusions were often highlighted as being much more country specific meaning their relevance to the situation in a Member State was highlighted as being stronger. However, it was recognised that it would be difficult to produce all policy steering instruments that were always relevant to all Member States.
- policy steering instruments that was based on good practices and peer learning were more useful and helpful to those Member States with identified weaknesses in their systems rather than those striving for 'excellence'. Stakeholders from the EU15 who undertook the e-survey noted that the 'innovative' practice and/ or the actual content of the recommendation/ guidance cited in the detail of various policy steering instruments were sometimes already present in their Member State. Ensuring that outputs of key policy steering instruments had those countries who were 'leaders' in mind were therefore seen as being important.
- not surprisingly, Member States that were more heavily involved in ET 2020 policy steering instruments such as Commission Recommendations and CSR were generally more positive about their overall effectiveness. There were considerably more examples of the effectiveness of ET 2020 policy shaping instruments on policy and practice by those Member States who had been part of the development of certain CSRs or discussions to develop Commission Recommendations by those who had actively been involved in meetings, discussions or some consultation exercise linked to them compared to those that had not. In short, in ET 2020 the adage 'the more you put in, the more you get out' applies;

- the Member States who perceived that their education and training agenda was relatively well developed also tended to state that there were other networks within their countries that helped stimulate the 'steering' of policy and the development of knowledge on various education and training issues. German, UK and Finish stakeholders were much more likely to highlight other research, tools, think tanks and networks being influential in their decision making process. For instance, in the UK there were various working groups, networks and conferences set up by the Department for Work and Pensions as well as the Department for Communities and Local Government to stimulate Government officials through to head teachers to learn from one another. By contrast, in Estonia and Spain stakeholders did not tend to highlight 'alternatives' to ET 2020 deliverables.

### 3.2.2.2 *Critical Success Factors*

Key issues related to the effectiveness of activity that steered policy development were as follows:

- **Inclusive development process**

The actual process of developing both the Council Conclusions (which involved 2 'parties') and Joint declarations (that involved multiple parties) was seen as being particularly useful. In fact, the process of building and producing either the Council Conclusions or the Joint declarations in particular was often seen as being as helpful as the outcome itself because it stimulated a range of different stakeholders to come together to discuss, debate and decide an 'action' on a range of different issues. This development phase was helpful to both understand various issues from different viewpoints, develop stronger working relationships (that often carried on after the session) and particularly helped create a more collaborative approach between EU and Member State level organisations and institutions. When the actual outcome of the discussions (i.e. the Council Conclusion/ Joint declaration) was launched, published or announced the stakeholders involved all tended to understand its meaning and the level of ownership that was achieved always tended to high.

- **Involving the wider partners/ stakeholders**

Another key issue coming from stakeholders who were interviewed through the interim evaluation relates to involving the right partners when developing key policy steering instruments linked to ET 2020. In this respect, the Joint Declarations between EU institutions and stakeholders were seen as being particularly beneficial. This was mainly because they involved social partners who tended to sit outside of the EU and Member State institutions but who were often seen as being instrumental on a particular issue and therefore vital to involve in both the declarations development and implementation. For example, the joint declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships<sup>33</sup> was developed and signed by the Commission, the EU Council Presidency but also a range of cross-sectorial European social partners including the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises, BusinessEurope and the European Trade Union Confederation. In addition, other stakeholders such as VET providers, sectorial organisations and youth organisations also made pledges to ensure that the declaration was supported and that it had extra profile at different levels within the apprenticeship agenda. Involving a wider group of social partners and other stakeholders in the development of this declaration beyond simply EU and Member State Government Policy makers was often highlighted as a critical success factor.

- **Flexibility**

The level of flexibility which CSRs, Council Conclusions, Commission Communications/ Recommendations and joint declarations had was often seen as critical to their overall success and influence at the Member State level. Achieving a balance in flexibility that provided a clear steer to Member States on a particular issue or subject but which also allowed flexibility and interpretation at Member State level was often highlighted as an important factor to get right. Stakeholders taking part in the country level research often highlighted a strong desire for the policy steering instruments to provide guidance for 'consideration' rather than specifically telling them how to implement it.

<sup>33</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-634\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-634_en.htm)

However, stakeholders in Member States largely agreed that the level of flexibility was ‘about right’ and that so far ET 2020 policy steering instruments took into consideration the need to let Member States respond in the ways that they felt most appropriate. Not surprisingly, ‘older’ Member States were more supportive of policy steering instruments which gave the most flexibility and ‘freedom’ to Member States.

- **Level of detail**

Linked to the above issue, another key critical success factor linked to major policy steering instruments associate with ET 2020 is the level of detail they provide. Interestingly, there were different views from Member States on the level of detail which various policy instruments should provide, with the ‘newer’ Member States tending to say that more detail was sometimes required, whilst the ‘older’ Member States tended to say policy steering instruments should provide an overview (e.g. key objectives, goals and principles) with the ‘detail’ left to Member states to develop themselves. For example, the CSR provided under the European Semester to guide Member States on various issues were supported by a series of other complementary activities including the Annual ET 2020 Peer Reviews and the in-depth country workshops (these activities are dealt with under the previously activity type). These activities as well as deliverables such as the staff working documents were often seen to provide to the actual practical advice that Member States needed to implement and ‘act’ upon the major policy steer CSRs were giving the Member States.

### 3.2.3 Activity type 3: Analytical and research activities

Activities that are included under this third activity type relates to those which provide analytical and statistical advice and guidance to EU institutions and Member States. Work stimulated by ET 2020 that falls under this umbrella includes various research reports, the ET Monitor and a large range of other, often diverse, written outputs commissioned through ET 2020 (e.g. the TWGs) which aim to help reform Member State policy and practice though a stronger evidence base and a better understanding of various issues.

#### 3.2.3.1 *Assessment of effectiveness*

A key aspect on the effectiveness of activities linked to analysis and research, relates to its ability to provide a stronger evidence base on which Member States (as well as other stakeholders linked to education and training) can base their strategies, actions and interventions. While some activities linked to producing better analysis and statistics have worked better than others (dealt with next in this sub-section) there is generally a strong feeling among stakeholders that a key outcome of ET 2020 overall has been an increase in intelligence, research and knowledge linked to the education and training agenda which, importantly, has helped at Member State level.

The analysis and statistics generated through ET 2020 has been particularly effective in four main ways:

- **Helping Member States to better understand key issues and problems linked to education and training**

This particularly includes helping stakeholders in MS to gather data and statistics to help them develop more informed and robust evidence. Stakeholders taking part in the country level research often highlighted outputs of ET 2020 in terms of research and studies which helped develop stronger evidence to understand and ‘make sense’ of an array of problems and issues linked to their education and training national agenda. For example, the TWG on Early School Leaving provided a much stronger understanding of the costs of early school leaving across Europe<sup>34</sup>. The desk research shows that one of the key deliverables of this group was the quantification of the issue of early school leaving and the costs to the individual learner as well as the tax payer of people leaving education prematurely. The deliverable provided as a better evidence base to influence Member States to ‘invest’ in early school leaving prevention, as well as the benefits that the latter will have on reducing national debt in the longer term. The desk research also shows that in Italy, data derived from ET 2020 is used in Higher Education for comparative analysis and to increase the transparency of the system. For instance, regarding the Diploma Supplement, the release of the data on the performance

<sup>34</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/europe-esl-costs\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/europe-esl-costs_en.pdf)



of different diplomas has been included among the criteria for the periodic evaluation of courses delivered in Italian universities<sup>35</sup>. In France, issues on mobility at school raised at European level through ET 2020 initiated the development of national statistics on pupil mobility collected since 2011<sup>36</sup>.

- **Helping Member States and EU agencies understand differences between countries (benchmarking)**

This involved helping understand how Member States contrast and compare each other on a range of different metrics and indicators. This was helpful in relation both for EU level organisations (including the Commission) to understand where issues were most prevalent, best or worst, as well as helping Member States themselves understand how they compared to other countries (and therefore how serious a particular issue was). For example, the Study on Policy Measures to improve the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in Europe provides a detailed assessment of factors influencing the attractiveness of the teaching professions in Europe and attempts to benchmark and compare countries against each other through a variety of quantitative (and qualitative) data<sup>37</sup>. Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions produced through the High Level Group on the Modernisation of HE again highlights how good research and statistics were used to understand the different levels of quality across Member States<sup>38</sup>.

- **Helping to identify priority groups and generally raising awareness**

A key benefit of the work ET 2020 has stimulated around statistics and analysis related to helping countries, agencies and other stakeholders understand those beneficiaries, challenges or issues that were the biggest priorities. ET 2020 deliverables were particularly important in terms of increasing the awareness among practitioners of the issues and needs for tackling both ESL and HE attainment levels. Stakeholders taking part in the country level research highlighted the benefits of ET 2020 increasing the profile of the two issues across Member States, and ensuring that they remained high profile in discussions and strategies linked to education in particular. In Latvia, Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK, the fact that ET 2020 was partly focussed on reducing ESL helped stakeholders in the Ministries to encourage those outside of central Government to 'sit up and listen' and understand the importance of this issue at the European level. Stakeholders in the Portuguese Ministry (Ministry of Education and Science) in particular stated that it was very helpful when speaking to schools and colleges to have the European Commission (through ET 2020) stating that ESL was an issue that the Portuguese education system was minded to look at. Representatives from other Member States mentioned that because HE was identified as a 'hot topic' in ET 2020 this again gave them more influence when negotiating with organisations and stakeholders outside of the Ministry (particularly HE institutions) to address various issues (on issues such as funding and prioritisation). Giving profile and impetus to their discussions based on European level priorities and focus.

### 3.2.3.2 Critical success factors

Although it is recognised that the different types of research and statistical work coming from ET 2020 all differ in terms of their nature, depth and subject, there are broader critical success factors that show the 'vital ingredients' which work in this area should contain, in order to make it more effective and ultimately useful to the European and Member State education and training agenda. These critical success factors also provide an assessment of some of the weaknesses of the ET 2020 activities that relate to analytical and research activities.

<sup>35</sup> <http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/universita/diploma-supplement>

<sup>36</sup> Ministère de l'éducation nationale (2012). *Ouverture européenne et internationale des académies. Résultats nationaux de l'enquête 2010-2011*.

<sup>37</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2013/teaching-profession1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2013/teaching-profession1_en.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/high-level-group-on-the-modernisation-of-higher-education-pbNC0113156/>



These critical success factors have again been generated by desk based analysis of the different outputs generated through ET 2020 which fall under the research and analysis activity type as well as an assessment of these outputs from those stakeholders in Member States that have used them on the ground (i.e. the views of the end users of the research and statistics generated who were asked why certain outputs were more useful than others). The critical success factors identified are as follows:

- **Quantitative and statistical based**

This involved strong analytical and research activities coming from ET 2020 through a focus on quantitative information and statistical data. This 'hard' evidence was seen as being particularly useful in relation to both 'pinpointing' an issue and challenge within education and training as well as providing more robust data to use when developing or designing activity to address particular problem. Quantitative and statistics data was particularly seen as being helpful when it came to benchmarking and comparing countries or issues. Although qualitative information (particularly from case studies) were also seen as being useful to shed light on issues in more detail, having robust quantitative information at the pan-European level, was nearly always highlighted as a critical success factor by stakeholders interviewed at both the EU and Member State level. A prime example of this was in relation to a research study coming from the High-Level-Group on Literacy on literacy in Europe<sup>39</sup>. The focus of the report has been on literacy skills in Europe and it provides a full suite of statistics on literacy across different groups in Europe as well as specific age groups (young children, children, adolescents, and adults).

- **Primary research providing 'new' data**

Linked to the above issue was a critical success factor around the research and analysis incorporating and being based on primary research activity, where the data presented was 'new' and which gave Member States additional understanding on a particular issue. This included primary research with beneficiaries (e.g. the long term unemployed, lone parents, SMEs) to understand their needs, as well as primary research with different stakeholders linked to a particular theme (e.g. second chance education, skills needs of teachers) to understand the various key issues facing a particular theme, subject or sector.

- **Meta assessments**

Although primary data stemming from ET 2020 activity was seen as being an important ingredient of success, secondary research was also seen as being particularly useful when a meta assessment and analysis was undertaken. Research and analysis which brought together a series of studies, good practice or research from across different parts of Europe, were also seen as being particularly useful and something which stakeholders based in Member States thought added the most value to their work. For example, a report Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care<sup>40</sup> was identified as particularly useful because it made an effort to firstly draw on an array of different data sources from previous studies, attempted to make a comparison between each study but importantly also helped to highlight overall conclusions based on patterns of messages and findings that were emerging across all of the studies and data referred to in the report. This gave stakeholders much more solid and robust evidence when it came to a variety of different issues as it was built on the 'joint' findings of several similar studies on the same subject matter.

- **Research and statistics at Member State rather than EU level**

Frequently cited as being valuable by stakeholders interviewed at the Member State level were deliverables that gave them robust and harmonised country level data and information. Country level information, whether in terms of data, good practice or general research information was seen as being much more helpful and applicable to them compared to European wide information and statistics. Research deliverables that had comparator information (to benchmark Member States against each other) was seen as being particularly useful by the target audience of the various research reports coming out of ET 2020 activities.

<sup>39</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/reports/literacy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/reports/literacy_en.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key\\_data\\_series/166EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/166EN.pdf)

- **Analytical rather than passive ‘information sharing’**

A key critical success factor highlighted by the end users of the various analytical and research activities, was around the knowledge having clear policy conclusions, recommendations and implications. There was a much stronger preference for research, analysis and outputs to present the ‘so what’ analysis which helped stakeholders ‘make sense’ of the knowledge, information or data being provided by them. Where research reports were mainly focussed on presenting statistics rather than analysing and interpreting them then their utilisation and impact were less obvious when the evaluators tested them in the country level research. For example,

An activity linked to ET 2020 which was often highlighted as good practice and which generally covered all of the main critical success factors covered above was the Education and Training (ET) Monitor<sup>41</sup>. The ET Monitor is an instrument used to encourage more evidence-based policy making and is produced annually to illustrate the evolution of education and training systems across Europe. The Monitor contributes to the analytical basis for the European Semester and provides input to national debates within Member States. In the latest 2013 ET Monitor (so far two have been produced) there are 28 country reports which provide an array of statistics and research to help understand and evaluate the performance and progress of the Member States in relation to the ET 2020 targets. Although this is partly a monitoring tool, the output of the ET Monitor was often used by Member States to understand, track, compare and act upon the information it provides on a range of different issues<sup>42</sup>. As stated above, its strengths were its meta-level approach, through collecting information from a range of different sources, and its focus on statistics and figures, its Member State level info and its level of analysis (rather than passive information sharing). The Monitor takes into account a variety of benchmarks and indicators, as well as recent studies and policy developments to provide what stakeholders regards as being an extremely useful addition to the activity linked to research and analysis coming from the ET 2020 framework.

### 3.2.4 Activity type 4 - Tools

Particular tools to foster transparency and recognition of qualifications, experiences and skills throughout the EU have been developed through ET 2020 activity, which in turn enable sustainable national reforms in education and training. The interim evaluation has undertaken a desk based assessment of these tools as well as interviewing stakeholders who have either developed or used these tools. The tools which are the focus of this sub-section are as follows:

- The European Framework of Key Competences is a tool for policy-makers across the EU which identifies the fundamental skills that people need to lead successful lives in today's world;
- The European Qualification Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) aims to better link different national qualifications systems at all educational levels, acting as a translation device for pupils, educational institutions, young people and employers to better understand qualifications from different EU countries, thus making it easier to study, work or hire staff abroad;
- The European Quality Assurance Reference framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) helps national authorities to improve their Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems, through the development of common European references;
- The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is being developed to help the transfer and recognition of learning experiences in Europe, including those outside formal training systems;

<sup>41</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/et-monitor\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/et-monitor_en.htm)

<sup>42</sup> Particularly early leavers from education and training, Tertiary education attainment, Early childhood education and care, Low achievement in reading, maths, and science, Employment rate of recent graduates, Adult participation in lifelong learning.

- The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) provides a common basis to recognise higher education study periods abroad;
- The Diploma Supplement (DS) accompanies a higher education diploma, providing a standardized description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by its holder;
- Europass helps people make their qualifications and skills better understood and recognised throughout Europe, increasing their employment prospects. Its web portal includes interactive tools that, for example, allow users to create a CV in a common European format;
- The National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) provide information and advice on the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study abroad; and
- Other guidance tools and information sources on learning and career opportunities in the EU, including the PLOTEUS portal and the Euroguidance network.

Please note that many of the above tools have either been recently developed or not yet formally evaluated. This means that the focus of this sub-section is on those tools that have both been evaluated and have been in existence long enough to understand the level of their effectiveness. As well as the more specific tools linked to ET 2020 activities there were also more general tools, which are also assessed as part of this sub-section.

### 3.2.4.1 Assessment of Effectiveness

The table below provides a summary of the main evaluation findings linked to three main tools associated with ET 2020 activities.

Tools	Overall conclusion on influence on reforms	Examples of impact at MS level
<p>The European Qualification Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) aims to better link different national qualifications systems, acting as a translation device for employers and individuals to better understand qualifications from different EU countries, thus making it easier to work, study or hire staff abroad.</p> <p>Source: Evaluation October 2013<sup>43</sup>)</p>	<p><i>“Policy impact of the EQF: The overall impact of the EQF on education and training policies has been limited so far, although there are examples of countries in which the EQF has been an opportunity to launch wider reforms of their education and training system. Commitment to the EQF shows that countries have embraced the objectives of improving lifelong learning, transparency of the education system to very large extent, thus indirectly contributing to wider EU goals linked to the development of individuals, competitiveness, employment and social cohesion”.</i> The 2014 ET 2020 National Reports show that 16 countries refer to this tool with them stating that they are working towards its implementation because of its perceived usefulness in terms of internal mobility across sectors at national level but also across borders. Progress on some of its implementation has been slower than expected or predicted in its development meaning the pace of progress needs to be quickened going forward.</p>	<p>(p.23) <i>“The EQF Recommendation stimulated or crystallised education reforms. The shift to learning outcomes is for “novice” countries one of the main pillars in such reform actions. Examples of this (expected) influence were expressed by interviewees in terms of: Introducing the use of learning outcomes in the country (Slovakia) and/or making the use of learning outcomes a higher priority in the policy agenda (Iceland, Italy); Driving programme (system level) and curriculum design (provider level) in Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia; Giving labour market relevance to qualifications, and making this relevance more explicit (Croatia, Estonia). Only interviewees in Denmark spontaneously linked the use of learning outcomes as a way to improve the quality of education and training”.</i></p> <p><i>“In Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Estonia, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, Switzerland and the UK, the influence of the EQF/NQF on the learning outcomes approach in the country was felt to be limited to non-existent.</i></p>

<sup>43</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/docs/education/eqf2013\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/education/eqf2013_en.pdf)

Tools	Overall conclusion on influence on reforms	Examples of impact at MS level
		<i>This was due, in most cases, to the pre-existence of the learning outcomes culture in the country prior to the EQF/NQF developments</i> ".
<p>The European Quality Assurance Reference framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) helps national authorities to improve their Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems, through the development of common European references.</p> <p>(Evaluation June 2013<sup>44</sup>)</p>	<p>p.87) "EQAVET is clearly supporting change in quality assurance at national level in nearly two thirds of the countries participating. In these countries EQAVET content either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directly inspired change of national frameworks;</li> <li>• Is currently being incorporated into on-going reforms; or</li> <li>• Has supported implementation of national approaches via projects and tools.</li> </ul> <p>A vast majority of countries report positive contribution of EQAVET to the discussions on quality assurance and confirm that the sharing and learning at European level brought new impetus for national developments. The changes at national level influenced by EQAVET go in the direction of strengthening of quality assurance systems and measures".</p>	<p>p.65) "At country level, synergies between quality assurance and qualifications system developments are mentioned in several cases, with references to developments in EQF and QA being occasionally connected in national strategies on VET. Ten country reports indicate that there is new emphasis for quality assurance in VET due to qualifications frameworks developments. These countries are: BE nl, CZ, IE, LU, LV, MT, PT, RO and SK. In three of these countries the developments of quality assurance are also related to the introduction of recognition of non-formal and informal learning – CZ, SK and LV. BE fr is implementing a large scale reform of VET qualifications which combines elements of qualifications framework development and ECVET implementation. Quality assurance is for the moment not a prominent element of these reforms but it is expected to be put on the agenda in the near future".</p>
<p>Europass helps people make their qualifications and skills better understood and recognised throughout Europe, increasing their employment prospects. Its web portal includes interactive tools that, for example, allow users to create a CV in a common European format.</p> <p>(Evaluation March 2013<sup>45</sup>)</p>	<p>(p.66) "The EU co-financed network of National Europass Centres was a relevant and effective model for the implementation of Europass at national level, as evidenced by a spectacular overall growth in the usage and appreciation of Europass documents. The promotion and networking activities at national level were planned separately in each country. This allowed them to take into account the local circumstances, but a lack of common understanding on what types of promotion tools are more suitable for different types of target groups resulted in over reliance on passive communication and printed materials. National Europass Centres should receive better guidance on effective communication strategies".</p>	

<sup>44</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/docs/education/eqavet13\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/education/eqavet13_en.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/docs/education/europass2013\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/education/europass2013_en.pdf)

The limited number of evaluations of the tools, and the ‘work in progress’ nature of others, mean that it is difficult to definitively evaluate them in the context of ET 2020 and produce overall conclusions. However, from the evaluations noted above there are themes which resonate with those emerging from the interviews and the desk research around effectiveness. In particular, there is an opportunity to communicate their value more coherently (rather than individually), and for structured sharing of experience across Member States.

### 3.2.4.2 Effectiveness of other tools

There was a range of other tools that have been developed through various ET 2020 activities. The table below provides a selection of the tools identified through the desk research and shows the variety of tools that have so far been developed.

**Table 3.5 Examples of tools linked to ET 2020 Activity**

Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tool created to assess the skills needs of teachers developed as a consequence of work done by the TWG and HLG linked to teachers professional development. The tool provided a set of research tools (including questionnaires) that can be used to understand the skills levels and skills needs of teachers.</li> <li>• The TWG on Entrepreneurial Education<sup>46</sup> (in cooperation with the OECD) developed Entrepreneurship360 which is a self-assessment tool for schools and VET institutions to help judge the entrepreneurial capabilities and further steps for development. This was based on good practice from various Member State experiences.</li> <li>• The introduction of a stronger monitoring tool in France on ESL (to track those at most risk of leaving school early) which was stimulated by peer learning at the TWG and advice on what the tool should include (indicators, research methods, benchmarks etc.) and based on similar experiences in other countries.</li> <li>• The PLA on ‘how can investment in Adult learning be made smarter?’ brought together peer learning and experiences from BE, DE, HR, IE, LV, LT, PL, SE, SK, UK and CH to debate the best actions that countries can take to provide appropriate funding and enable more effective use of finance to promote adult learning. This included a tool to for self-assessment around improving the effectiveness and efficiency of funding going into this area.</li> <li>• The TWG on Early School Leaving provided a much stronger understanding of the costs of early school leaving across Europe through the development of research and a tool to understand the costs to the individual learner as well as the tax payer of people leaving education prematurely. The deliverable provided a range of data and statistics as better evidence base to influence Member States to ‘invest’ in early school leaving prevention, as well as the benefits that the latter will have on reducing public spending in the longer term.</li> </ul>

Source: Ecorys Desk Research

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/regional/leed/entrepreneurship360call.htm>

It is difficult to come to an overall conclusion on the effectiveness of all of these tools because they differ significantly in terms of scope, sophistication, scale and thematic coverage. As the above table shows, the tools flowing from the ET 2020 activity range from a simple 'checklist' to help Member States understand their approaches to ESL to a tool which helped countries to track those re-entering education to understand retention rates. However there are a series of broader critical success factors that can be highlighted based on desk research of these tools which reviewed their content, along with interviews with stakeholders in the Member States who have either used these tools or who could potentially use the tools in the future. The main critical success factors are as follows:

- **Member State level tools:** a key factor thought to stimulate the use of tools developed through ET 2020 activity was its application at Member State level. If the tools could be applied at Member State rather than EU level to understand an issue, to develop a stronger evidence base, or to tackle a problem then stakeholders interviewed at the country level felt that the tools actual use would increase as a consequence. This in turn would provide an 'instrument' for policy making in Member States rather than simply 'information' that was more difficult to directly 'act' on.
- **Applicable to a wide variety of audiences/ situations:** those tools which could be used across a wide variety of Member States, issues, and sectors were also those that were thought to be most useful. For instance, a tool that helped build a benchmark on HE modernisation for a country across a range of issues (so that they could understand how they compared to other Member States) was often highlighted as being very helpful and something that was well used in practice. This was mainly because it provided 'benchmarks' to a wide range of issues linked to HE modernisation rather than very specific data and information on a small themes or sector. Developing tools that are able to be used by a variety of different stakeholders was therefore seen as being most effective.
- **Useful for practitioners:** the last factor of success of tools linked to ET 2020 activity was around them helping practitioners rather than policy makers. Those tools that could be used by people such as teachers, college principles, training providers, lecturers, funders and businesses were seen as particularly helpful as they provided support to those 'on the ground' who were dealing with various issues on a day to day basis.



### 3.3 Summary of effectiveness and critical success factors

This chapter has so far provided an assessment of the effectiveness and critical success factors across four key activity areas of ET 2020. The diagram below provides a summary of this information.

Types of activity	Activity type 1: Major Policy Instruments	Activity type 2: Specific guidance for MS reform	Activity type 3: Analytical and statistical activities	Activity type 4: Tools for reform
Examples of outputs	The work of TWGs, HLG, Annual Peer Reviews, in-depth country workshops	Council conclusions, Council Communications/ recommendations/ joint declarations	Research reports, ET Monitor and other studies commissioned through ET 2020 activities	Tools including those linked to transparency (e.g. European Framework of key competencies, European Qualifications Framework).
Key areas of effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stimulation of discussion and debate among practitioners</li> <li>- Helping to stimulate action (not just discussion)</li> <li>- Helped directly and quickly disseminate information and good practice</li> </ul>	Effectiveness was influenced greatly by the Member State in question and the strength of their existing policy and practice linked to education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helping Member States to better understand key issues and problems linked to education and training</li> <li>- Helping Member States and EU agencies understand differences between countries (benchmarking)</li> <li>- Helping to identify priority groups and generally raising awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing practical 'instruments' for policy makers and practitioners to 'use' rather than more passive information sharing</li> <li>- Tools that helped 'inspire change' at Member State level through the practical application of tools</li> </ul>
Critical success factors – what makes a good deliverable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face to face interaction which stimulated new working relationships lasting longer than the activity itself.</li> <li>- 'Grouping' Member States together to ensure that they benefit, share and learn from those in a similar position</li> <li>- Action based to ensure 'action rather than just words' and discussion</li> <li>- Strong dissemination beyond those directly involved in the activity (ie beyond those attending a HLG)</li> <li>- Ensuring that meetings and other peer learning are well documented to that a wider audience can benefit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusive development process to help develop understanding, relationships and ownership</li> <li>- Involvement of wider partners and stakeholders beyond higher level Commission and MS Governments</li> <li>- Flexibility- getting the balance right</li> <li>- Level of detail- helping those who need it with the detail around 'how'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quantitative and statistical based giving Member States 'hard' information to use</li> <li>- Primary research providing 'new' data</li> <li>- Meta assessments drawing a large variety of different studies together to draw overall and triangulated conclusions</li> <li>- Research and statistics provided at Member State rather than EU level</li> <li>- Analytical rather than 'passive' information sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Member State level tools</li> <li>- Tools which are applicable to a wide variety of audiences/ situations and sectors</li> <li>- Useful for practitioners working 'on the ground' to help them in their 'everyday' jobs</li> </ul>

### 3.4 How much do the main achievements correspond to the ET 2020 objectives?

A sub-question linked to EQ2 is around providing an assessment of whether the main achievements of ET 2020, as outlined in the previous section, correspond to ET 2020 objectives. However, there are a number of methodological issues which makes this task difficult to robustly answer.

The way in which ET 2020 was set up makes it extremely difficult to identify the causal chains running from the objectives agreed through political processes at European level down to action in individual Member States. The open method of coordination in ET 2020 is intended to support Member States through the development of new ways of thinking and the sharing of good practice. Tracing lines of causality through such processes is extremely difficult, and the effect of the outputs of the open method of coordination on objectives is yet to be systematically monitored by the Commission. As discussed in the report, stakeholders in the Member States often found it very difficult to make simple and straightforward connections between ET 2020 objectives, policy developments and individual ET 2020 activities and outputs partly because a large variety of other factors “intervening” along the way. As a consequence, the problem of attribution is particularly significant in the case of an evaluation of a European level strategic framework like ET 2020.

It was also interesting to note that those who initiated the development of ET 2020 activities and deliverables or took part in various working groups or meetings did not see that their work fitted ‘neatly’ under one single or specific objective of ET 2020. Again, due to the broad nature of the objectives, it was difficult for stakeholders to ‘label’ their activities under a clearly defined objective or state that their activities helped support one specific goal of ET 2020 more than another. For example, a Handbook on good practice on adult teacher training developed by the TWG on HE modernisation could legitimately be linked to all four ET 2020 strategic objectives. The handbook could help stimulate more lifelong learning (Objective 1), it also improves the quality of education (Objective 2), it certainly promotes social cohesion (Objective 3) and the good practice contained in the handbook could also stimulate creativity and innovation (Objective 4). The multi-dimensional aspects of each ET 2020 activity and deliverable therefore again makes a robust assessment of achievement of objectives relatively complex.

Even if the major issue of attribution could be overcome, the data required to demonstrate whether or not ET 2020 has been successful in achieving its objectives and priorities would be extremely difficult. This is already demonstrated by the fact that the benchmarks and indicators which it has been possible to devise at European level so far cover only a small part of what ET 2020 is supposed to achieve. Some of the strategic objectives involve concepts that are hard to measure (e.g. ‘creativity’, ‘innovation’, ‘quality’) and there are no metrics that are readily available to robustly understand achievements. For example, objective 3 which is concerned with creativity and innovation does not have any indicators on how innovation should be measured, what type of innovation is being sought and so on. In addition, within Member States, the evaluators found very little evidence of systematic monitoring and evaluation of progress against ET 2020 which might be used to address the issue of effectiveness in relation to objectives robustly and systematically.

### 3.5 Overall added value resulting from ET 2020 compared to what could be achieved by Member States alone (EU added value)

Although understanding the EU added value of ET 2020 faces similar methodological issues to those described above (e.g. attribution, a lack of monitoring data etc) there are still a series of points that provide an understanding of the overall added value of ET 2020. This added value is centred on what could have been achieved by Member States in the absence of the European framework.

One of the main observations from the primary research (i.e. the views from 418 stakeholders from the e-survey and a further 148 stakeholders interviewed at the EU and Member State level) is that there is overall support for ET 2020, and that the framework does indeed add value to EU and Member State policy and practice. The overall impression from various stakeholders at all levels is that there is a need for a European framework in education and training, and that ET 2020 has a role to play in supporting Member States to continuously develop their systems, policy and practice. Therefore in general terms, the overall added value of ET 2020 was well recognised by those taking part in the research.

However, when assessing the added value of ET 2020 it needs to be considered that the drivers which influence developments in education and training policy and practice at MS level range across local, regional, national, and international levels. Often the added value of ET 2020 on MS education and training policy developments was seen as a mix of subtle, rather than explicit, benefits linked to helping shape responses on various issues linked to education and training (i.e. responses to dealing with youth unemployment, an aging work force or tackling early school leaving). However, there were more explicit benefits linked to giving practitioners working in these fields direct support in developing and implementing various actions linked to reform based on both international experiences and the views of various higher level experts involved in ET 2020 activities. Importantly, that support was multi-lateral, ranging across the EU 28 education and training landscape, offering stakeholders a single focus (for example in a TWG) to obtain an extensive international policy perspective. The key importance of ET 2020 was around providing a designated framework to ensure that learning both took place but was also maximised, rather than assuming that Member States good practice would automatically filter through and down to other Member States. ET 2020 remains the only integrated framework in the education and training policy agenda meaning its added value around shared learning was often the issue most highlighted by stakeholders.

It is also worth noting that the level of EU added value of ET 2020 was uneven across the different sectors of education and training. As described earlier in this report, the schools sector has seen a particularly high level of added value because its activities and outputs aligned well to the critical success factors found in this chapter (i.e. they were action based, Member State level, practical etc). Other sectors may have seen less added value although this may be because their activities have been less clearly disseminated or recorded and were therefore less obvious to the stakeholders found in the Member States as well as the evaluators more widely.

When it came to ET 2020 stimulating information, knowledge exchange and shared learning, two key aspects of European added value were particularly highlighted by stakeholders at the Member State level:

- **Accelerating learning**

A key added value of ET 2020 has been its success in stimulating transnational dialogue across Member State borders on a wide range of issues and solutions linked to education and training. This led stakeholders to highlight the 'acceleration' of learning as a key added value of ET 2020. ET 2020 was seen to help stimulate both an increased volume and scale of learning which would have been difficult to achieve in the absence of the framework. This is mainly because ET 2020 was seen as the only real place where transnational learning took place. Although learning within Member States tended to occur, the volume and scale of activities and outputs generated through ET 2020 was significant which meant stakeholders were exposed to much more good practice, tools, events, handbooks and so on compared to what they would have done without the existence of ET 2020.

- **Better equipping practitioners**

As well as simply providing stakeholders with 'more' learning, the other main added value of the framework highlighted by stakeholders was around giving practitioners involved in Europe's education and training agenda the tools that would help them in their work. As explained earlier in this section, ET 2020 has empowered stakeholders within Europe with a series of tools and other practical measures that are helping address key issues in the education and training agenda. These tools range across monitoring frameworks, competency grids, self-assessment tools, early warning systems, quality assurance guides, and comparative analysis tools to equip practitioners with a series of often bespoke tools that help drive forward improvement and positive change across a range of key issues. Many stakeholders working at the higher level within Member States highlighted the practical help that ET 2020 has provided to tackle problems 'on the ground', rather than highlighting discussions and debates happening at the higher more strategic level.

## 4.0 EQ 3 Evaluation of the ET 2020 Governance Methods and Policy Instruments

**EQ 3 To what extent have ET 2020's governance methods and policy instruments been relevant to, effective and efficient in the implementation of the Europe 2020 priorities (including the implementation of the CSRs) in the Member States?**

This Evaluation Question forms in many ways form the core of the evaluation, and this is reflected in the length and complexity. Along with Evaluation Question 2 on effectiveness, this question concerns the way in which Member States engage with the policy formulation processes of ET 2020, and translate the outputs into policy developments and reform programmes within their own countries and regions. This aspect of ET 2020 is likely to be fundamental to understanding the extent to which ET 2020 leads to change (or not) at MS level. Whether this is the case for ET 2020, depends on a range of factors that are explored in this chapter. First we look at the infrastructure of the OMC: the various bodies involved, both formally and informally. We specifically look at the following judgment criteria under Governance:

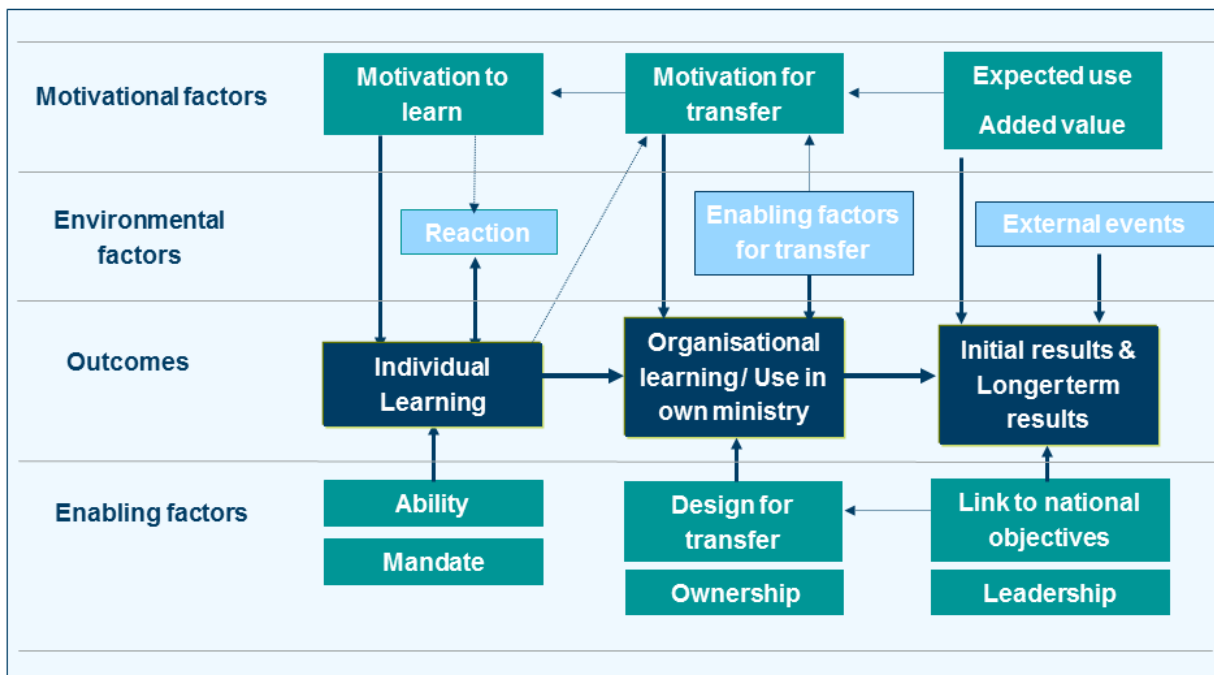
- JC 3.1 ET 2020 governance bodies (such as the Education Council, Education Committee, Commission etc.) participate in shaping and/or deciding on education-relevant outcomes within the Europe 2020 and European Semester framework and other relevant agendas such as the Youth Employment Package;
- JC 3.2 ET 2020 governance has been successful in an effective coordination, tuning and streamlining of the overall ET 2020 process with the sectorial education agendas for schools, VET, adult learning, and higher education so that the output of the sectorial agendas reinforces the overall strategy;
- JC 3.3 ET 2020 decision-making process (with its governance structures/bodies, meetings and events) have been effective and efficient in turning out results; and
- JC 3.4 The ET 2020 monitoring mechanism has been effective at refocusing and reorienting the ET 2020 framework.

To analyse and understand the interactions between the various elements of the evaluation question and the corresponding judgment criteria, we use an adapted model for transfer of learning (based on Holton, 2006). The model details the enabling and inhibiting factors, known from earlier research, that influence the outputs and effects of the Open Method of Coordination.

Figure 4.1 below gives an overview of the main factors, based on the refined model of Kirkpatrick (Holton, 2006)<sup>47</sup>. It shows the complexity of variables that influence outcomes of interventions like meetings, training sessions or communication. Whether there is an ultimate impact, depends on motivational factors, environmental factors and ability and enabling factors. Behind this model is a wealth of literature, for example of transfer of training, which gives guidance for optimizing the chances of creating impact. Within the evaluation of the ET 2020 it is important to look at the factors that can be influenced by the various actors at EU level and the Member States. Whereas 'motivation to learn' and 'ability' are typically factors that are not that easy to change, the 'design for transfer' and 'expected use' can be optimized, using various methods and techniques.

<sup>47</sup> Elwood F. Holton III (2006) *The flawed four-level evaluation model*. Human Resource Development Quarterly, Wiley Periodicals, Inc., A Wiley Company

**Figure 4.1 Model for explaining outcomes**



The analysis of each factor, will contribute to a better understanding of the following judgment criteria which were used to operationalise the overall evaluation question:

- JC 3.5 The ET 2020 Open Method of Coordination (OMC) has been able to effectively stimulate cross-fertilisation of “good practice” between Member States;
- JC 3.6 ET 2020 meetings and events (such as the meetings of the HLG and DG groupings, TWGs, the annual Peer Review and other peer learning activities) are effective in maximizing Member State ownership and commitment of Europe 2020 priorities in the field of education and training;
- JC 3.7 ET 2020 meetings and events enable the integration of pertinent stakeholder views (including views of the social partners) to create a solid basis for reform and adaptation at the national level;
- JC 3.8 The deliverables of ET 2020 have been effectively or properly disseminated in the Member States (for example to decision-makers, education and training institutions and other stakeholders);



As ET 2020 combines many instruments, and works through a wide variety of channels, the key question is how to optimize the governance and use of policy instruments, to help Member States with policy developments and reform programs. There are a number of enabling factors that increase the chances of getting real results. To a certain degree these factors can be influenced by those coordinating the OMC process, however the Member States have their own responsibility.

*JC 3.1 ET 2020 governance bodies (such as the Education Council, Education Committee, Commission etc.) participate in shaping and/or deciding on education-relevant outcomes within the Europe 2020 and European Semester framework and other relevant agendas such as the Youth Employment Package;*

The “playing field” of Education and Training at EU level is a mixture of formal and informal bodies that work on both technical issues and political support. Interviewees emphasised the importance of the work by the Education Council, and for its political support at EU and Member State levels. The increased cooperation between the Education Committee and Employment Committee in light of the European Semester is clearly understood and welcomed by most stakeholders consulted. The roles of the High Level Group on Education and Training and the DG groupings have been strengthened through clearer links with the Working Groups and clear agreements on the mandates of the groups. This was clearly an area for improvement in the former generation of working groups.

*JC 3.2 ET 2020 governance has been successful in an effective coordination, tuning and streamlining of the overall ET 2020 process with the sectorial education agendas for schools, VET, adult learning, and higher education so that the output of the sectorial agendas reinforces the overall strategy;*

While the range and generality of the ET 2020 objectives has enabled it to be relevant and coherent in respect of sector-based communities and agendas, it has not enabled ET 2020 to be implemented in a consistent and coherent manner. This may be suitable from the perspective of the different sectors which have very different institutional and policy contexts. However, a more systematic and consistent connection between ET 2020 and sectoral agenda-setting and delivery would enable the more effective implementation of ET 2020, especially with regard to transversal priorities which span most or all sectors.

*JC 3.3 ET 2020 decision-making process (with its governance structures/bodies, meetings and events) have been effective and efficient in turning out results; and*

The timing of events and the interaction between the various bodies involved seems to have followed its own logic, although it was not possible to reconstruct a full calendar of events in the past 4 years. A recent planning agenda for ET 2020 activities shows that the Education Committee plays an important role in

*JC 3.4 The ET 2020 monitoring mechanism has been effective at refocusing and reorienting the ET 2020 framework.*

The ET 2020 monitoring mechanisms involve an evidence base focused on the seven specific ET 2020 benchmark targets, with a yearly country analysis in the “Education and Training Monitor” providing the key basis for assessing progress. In addition, core indicators are provided for other ET priority areas such as languages, adult skills, teachers, investment in education and training, ICT in education, entrepreneurship in education and VET. Furthermore the involvement of peer learning events with a country specific focus (both in the Working groups and at the level of DG groupings) produce a wealth of information that is useful for countries receiving CSRs. At the Council level, several conclusions have been issued that focus on improving the working of ET 2020 and aligning ET 2020 with Europe 2020, which led to a number of substantial changes to the framework.

*JC 3.5 The ET 2020 Open Method of Coordination (OMC) has been able to effectively stimulate cross-fertilisation of “good practice” between Member States;*

Within the ET 2020 OMC a wide variety of approaches have been implemented and tested. The rationalisation of Thematic Working Groups, and the alignment of the work with the higher political level, seems an effective strategy, also when we look at sectors where this alignment was already there (i.e. VET and Higher Education).

Levels of participation in and commitment to ET 2020 vary across Member States due to a variety of factors including their assessment of the likely benefits they will obtain. Member States with education and training systems which are at, or near to, achieving targets and benchmarks are at risk of low levels of participation and this risks damaging the availability of good practice. There is a need to recognise this diversity and ensure that ET 2020 has a focus on excellence, on exceeding targets and not just achieving them.

*JC 3.6 ET 2020 meetings and events (such as the meetings of the HLG and DG groupings, TWGs, the annual Peer Review and other peer learning activities) are effective in maximizing Member State ownership and commitment of Europe 2020 priorities in the field of education and training;/ JC 3.7 ET 2020 meetings and events enable the integration of pertinent stakeholder views (including views of the social partners) to create a solid basis for reform and adaptation at the national level;*

ET 2020 processes are complicated, involving different bodies with different formal/informal statuses. It is difficult for those not involved in running the system to understand it in its entirety, and hence to understand their role. This lack of transparency deters participation and undermines the effectiveness of processes and outputs. ET 2020 also lacks adequate levels of visibility in the context of the 2011 Council Conclusions which invited the Commission to ‘strengthen the visibility and transparency of measures taken in the context of the OMC by ensuring effective operational coordination’: outside of those directly involved, awareness tails off dramatically.

However, also in this area there were clear signs of improvement. The annual Forum has helped to strengthen links with social partners and civil society, and the Commission benefits from the structural contacts established. These help to improve the evidence-base for policy reforms.

*JC 3.8 The deliverables of ET 2020 have been effectively or properly disseminated in the Member States (for example to decision-makers, education and training institutions and other stakeholders);*

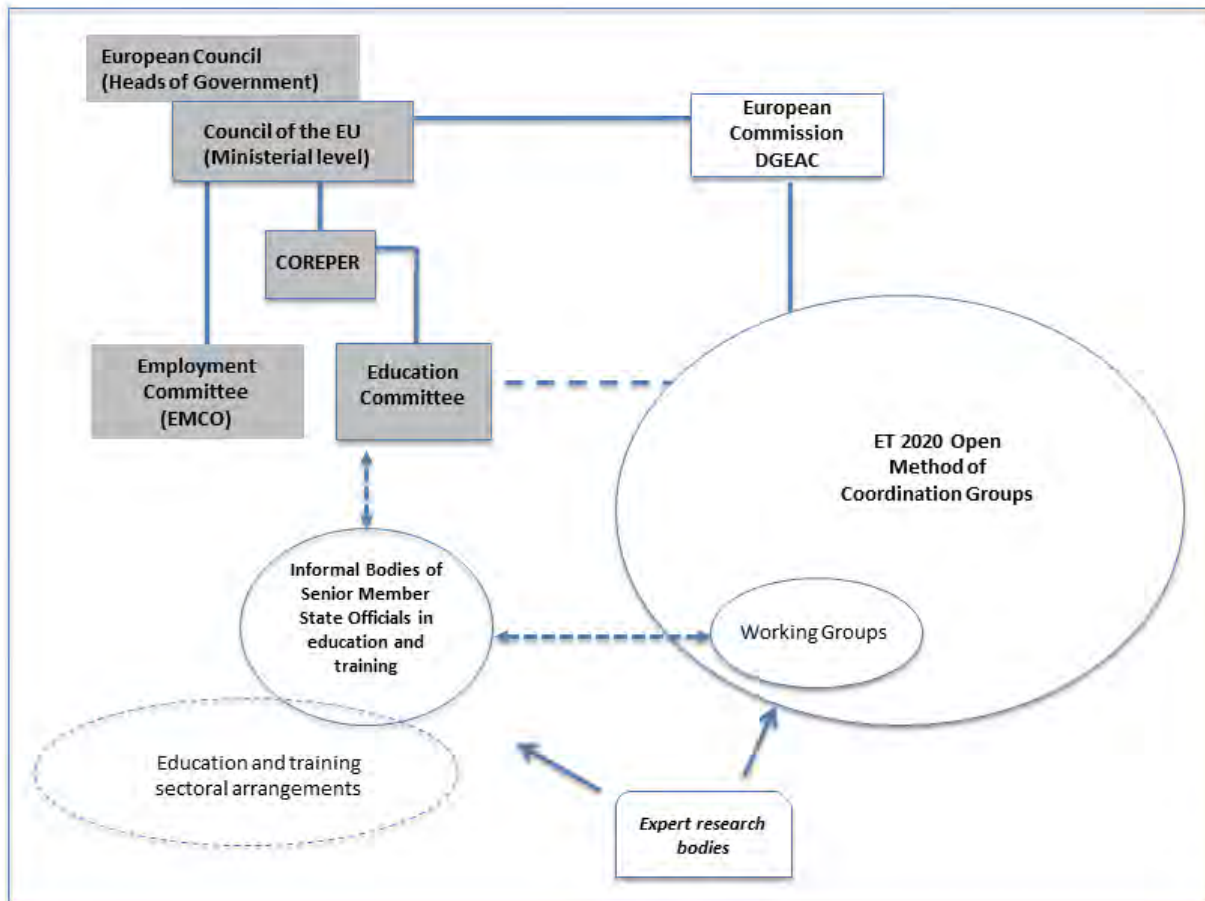
The effectiveness of ET 2020 in delivering change in Member States depends on a balance of factors, those intrinsic to ET 2020 and those internal to Member States. However, a lack of impact in Member States is likely to be due less to the effectiveness of ET 2020 processes and outputs and more to weaknesses in the take-up of ideas within Member States themselves.

## 4.1 Governance of ET 2020: formal bodies (JC 3.1, JC 3.3)

This section first looks at the more formal side of governance of ET 2020, along with the informal groupings of senior officials of Member States and Commission: the High Level Group on Education and Training and the three Groupings of Directors General for School Education, Vocational Training, and Higher Education.

Figure 4.6 uses the diagram first presented in the Introduction but provides further detail with the formal elements shaded. Each ET 2020 governance body is examined in turn, highlighting key findings.

**Figure 4.2 Governance Bodies involved in ET 2020**



The **European Council** defines the general political directions and priorities of the EU, and plays a leading role in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester. Its conclusions increasingly include references to the importance of education and training for economic recovery and employment.

**The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS)** brings together the Ministers in the formal Education, Youth, Culture and Sport configuration on average three times per year. The precise composition of the Council depends on the items discussed in a particular meeting. Council meetings are also attended by a representative from the European Commission: usually the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. The Council adopts incentive measures, recommendations, resolutions and conclusions that drive ET 2020 work forward.

The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council<sup>48</sup> is the body that launched, follows and steers the implementation of ET 2020 strategic framework.

Interviewees emphasised the importance of the work by the Education Council, and for its political support at EU and Member State levels.

<sup>48</sup> Often referred to as the Education Council.

The **Education Committee** is a Working Party of the Council and is in charge of preparing the agenda and conclusions of the Education Council configuration in detail. The majority of issues on the Education Committee agenda emanate from the Commission. In the Education Committee, the Member States are represented through the education attachés in their Permanent Representations and/or by officials coming from their Ministry of Education. The European Commission is present at the Education Committee as a full participant. Like the Council itself, the Education Committee is chaired by the country holding the Council Presidency. The Committee meets twice a month. The outputs of the Committee meetings go through the **Committee of Permanent Representatives** (Coreper) to the Council.

The Education Committee solves most of the issues by consensus before it reaches the Ministers in the Council. As some interviewees involved in the Education Committee mentioned, there is a risk that when all the issues are solved at the Education Committee level, then Ministers will not necessarily feel the need to have a debate. Some policy conclusions may therefore be less strong, as was mentioned by a few closely involved. The Irish Presidency decided for this reason to leave some issues not fully concluded at the level of the Education Committee to deliberately stimulate ministerial debate.

The **High Level Group on Education and Training** is an informal forum for senior officials from the Member States and the Commission. Meetings take place without a legal basis, there are no formal rules of procedure and no formal decisions are taken. The HLG was initiated in 1996 by the MS and works entirely on a voluntary basis. They generally meet twice per year each, each time near the upcoming Council Presidency, to discuss European cooperation priorities in their areas of activity and to steer the activities of the ET 2020 Working Groups. The informal nature of the HLG is clearly valued by its participants, since 93% of HLG e-survey respondents said that the informal setting had an effect on realising the benefits from cooperation. Within the HLG, the debate is reported to be more open in than in the Education Committee since formal positions are not adopted. The HLG is more transversal than the DG groupings since it covers education and training as a whole and under the new generation of WGs is responsible for transversal topics. The HLG gives strategic orientation for the months ahead, and a strategic steer to the Presidency.

The HLG was intended to engage Secretary-Generals of Ministries of Education or heads of European Affairs Directorates within those ministries who would have an overview across education and training as a whole. It is reported that in practice the use of substitutes is not uncommon. In particular, some interviewees noted that the HLG suffers from too many Permanent Representation attachés attending as substitutes which means that there is too much overlap in participation with the Education Committee. A related issue noted was that HLG agendas may not be sent out early enough to enable MS to make the best decisions about who should attend.

Evidence from the e-survey suggests that HLG participants tend to be satisfied with the work of their group in a number of respects, and more positive than other respondents (Note: because small numbers of participants are involved, only large deviations from the responses of the total sample of respondents are noted). Asked if they believe that their group can reach conclusions that are both technically relevant and politically acceptable, HLG respondents (and also Education Committee respondents) were more likely to respond positively than those in other groups. HLG respondents were more likely to make practical use of the results from all levels, individual to national. And, they were more positive compared to others that HLG outcomes have stimulated better alignment of policy with ET 2020 objectives in the national policy or institutional context.

The three groupings of **Directors General for Schools, Vocational Training, and Higher Education** are also informal meetings, designed to enable high level officials from the sectors of education and training to discuss policy (the adult learning sector is covered by the DGVT). Their purpose is consultative. Being informal, there are no formal outcomes and no conclusions are drawn. They meet twice a year. Participants from the High Level Group and the DG groupings are often drawn from the same ministries, although, as noted above, the use of substitutes from Permanent Representations in the HLG can happen. There is no formal input from the HLG or DG meetings in the Education Committee. However, sometimes there are informal political discussions in the HLG on topics that will later be the subject of a formal Commission

Communication which will be addressed to the Council, i.e. to the Education Committee (hence the relationship is shown as a dotted line in Figure 4.1)

A common thread from the interviews was that, although the function of the DG groupings (as opportunities to have informal discussions) was understood, their role and influence beyond this was unclear. Such views were also expressed about the HLG. For example, one interviewee (whose position makes them well informed) characterised the DGs as *“trying to keep an overview, and filter issues through to the Education Committee and Council”*. They also provided a means by which views could be gathered, especially by the Commission, which led to speculation that this might be their prime purpose. Issues were also raised about the channelling of reports from Working Groups to the DGs, with one interviewee in the VET field stating that it is “patchy”.

Both the roles of the High Level Group on Education and Training and the Directors General groupings in relation to the Working Groups, and aligning ET 2020 with the Europe 2020 agenda, have been discussed extensively in the past two years. We will elaborate on the steering role in paragraph 4.2.

Another relevant body, although not part of ET 2020, is the **Employment Committee** (EMCO), in particular given its role in the European Semester. This advisory body, directly established under Article 150 of the TFEU formulates opinions at the request of either the Council or the Commission and contributes to the preparation of Council proceedings. It has an elected chair and its secretariat is provided by the Commission. It is therefore different from Council Working Parties like the Education Committee. EMCO has a primary role to advise Ministers on key outputs of the European Semester, including the Annual Growth Survey, National Reform Programmes, and Employment Guidelines. Importantly, since 2011 *“EMCO has pioneered work on strengthening multilateral surveillance – to monitor member countries’ progress implementing reforms prompted by the CSRs and prepare the next year’s CSRs for the Council to adopt”*<sup>49</sup>.

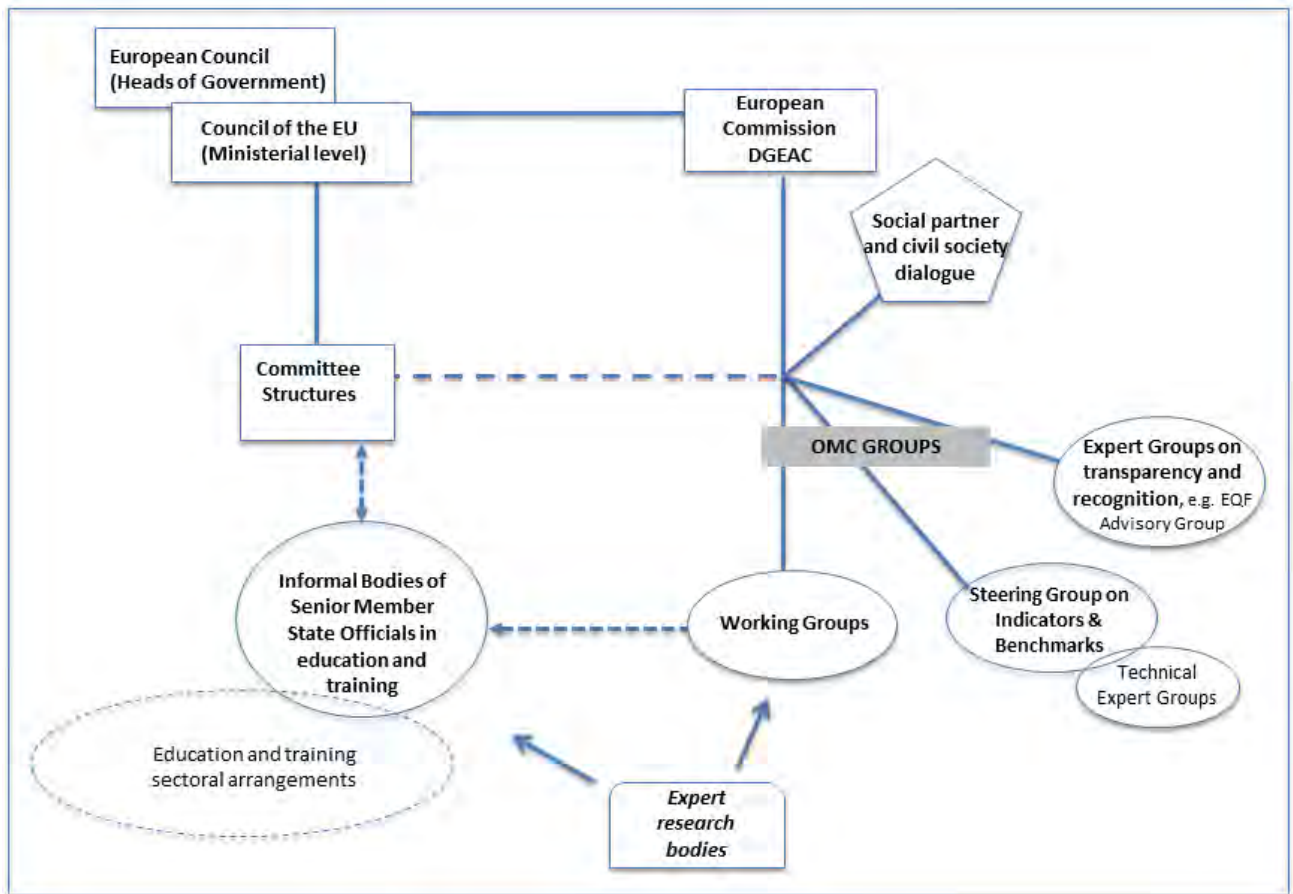
## 4.2 Governance of ET 2020: OMC groups (JC 3.5, 3.6)

In this section, we begin to look at the findings with respect to the informal as well as the more formal OMC elements. Figure 4.3 shows the structure of the OMC groups.

<sup>49</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=115>



**Figure 4.3 OMC groups involved in ET 2020**



#### 4.2.2 (Thematic) Working Groups

One of the key elements of the OMC are the Thematic Working Groups that already were in operation prior to ET 2020.

**Table 4.1 Overview of Thematic Working Groups with expiration dates**

#	Thematic Working Groups	Expiration date
1	ICT & Education	June 2013
2	Math, Science and Technology	July 2013
3	Entrepreneurship Education	November 2013
4	Teacher Professional Development	September 2013
5	Quality in Adult Learning	October 2013
6	Financing Adult Learning	October 2013
7	Early School Leaving	November 2013
8	Modernisation of Higher Education	December 2013
9	VET Trainers	February 2014
10	Early Childhood Education and Care	March 2014
11	Languages in Education and Training	September 2014



In February 2013, the Education Council asked the Member States and the Commission to establish: (1) “a closer link between the key strategic policy challenges identified throughout the European Semester, including Country Specific Recommendations, and OMC activities”; (2) Structures and procedures that increase the efficiency, effectiveness and Member States’ ownership of the OMC process, for example at the levels of Directors-General”; (3) “Regular feedback from all working groups...”; and, (4) “Clear mandates and standard operating procedures (i.e. terms of reference, deliverables, membership requirements and sunset clauses) for all TWGs”.

As a response to this invitation, three measures were proposed:

- Rationalise the tasks and number of TWGs;
- Improve the working methods of the TWGs; and
- Enhance the guidance and steering role of the HLG and DG meetings;

It was felt that, in order to avoid fragmentation of activities, ensure better ownership of the activities and to respond to human resource constraints faced by the Commission and the Member State’s administrations, a reduction of the number of TWGs was needed. In order to get a closer alignment between ET 2020 and Europe 2020 strategies, a number of key issues on which TWGs should focus, were proposed:

- Implementing the objectives of the ET 2020 and Europe 2020 strategies, including the achievement of headline targets;
- Implementing the priorities of Rethinking Education; and
- Implementing the agenda for the Modernisation of Europe’s Higher Education systems

Starting in the 2nd half of 2013, the OMC process in Education and Training is based on six Working Groups, as set out in [Table 4.2](#).

**Table 4.2 Overview of new ET 2020 Working Groups with responsible HLG or DG**

New generation Working Groups in Education and Training (starting end 2013)		Responsible HLG or DG	Scope and rationale
1	Schools, including Early School Leaving and the Teaching Profession	DG Schools	Europe 2020 Headline Target on ESL; Rethinking Education priority; subject of several CSRs and Council Recommendation on ESL from 2011
2	Modernisation of Higher Education	DG HE	Europe 2020 Headline Target on completion HE; Modernising Higher Education priority; subject of several CSRs
3	Vocational Education and Training, with an initial focus on apprenticeships and work-based learning, as key elements of overall VET systems	DGVT	Rethinking Education priority; subject of several CSRs
4	Adult Learning, with focus on strategies to reduce the number of low-skilled adults	DGVT	Rethinking Education priority; subject of several CSRs
5	Transversal Skills, including ICT and Entrepreneurial Skills (and Languages once the new benchmark is agreed)	HLG E&T	Rethinking Education priority; subject of several CSRs
6	Digital and Online Learning	HLG E&T	Rethinking Education priority

A limited number of horizontal policy issues are mainstreamed in the different WGs, notably:

- Sustainable and efficient funding for education and training;
- Social and equity aspects of education and training; and
- Issues around teaching and training of a general nature.

These groups are still in a “experimental” phase, and a decision about the future of these groups will be taken as part of the 2015 ET 2020 stocktaking exercise.

Probably the most significant change to the Working Groups is that there is now a clear link between the Working Groups and the governing bodies, i.e. the HLG on Education and Training and the Director General groupings. The Working groups report to the DG groupings, who report to the HLG. Thus support from the leadership is secured and ownership increased.

The ET 2020 Working Group mandates have been extensively discussed by the HLG and DG groupings and the Education Committee before their adoption. A systematic six-monthly reporting on the advancement of the WG activities to the responsible HLG/DG groupings and Education Committee has been introduced, with a possibility for the MS to steer the work of the Working Groups.

The HLG/DG groupings have a special responsibility to bring relevant elements from the OMC to the political attention via the Education Committee

The concrete tasks and work of each WG is steered by specific operational mandates, agendas and roadmaps, with concrete outputs linked to policy priorities as requested by the Council. A sunset clause indicates a specific duration of activities.

With regard to the working methods of the WGs, proposals for improvement were made. These included the suggestion to designate “leaders” for the implementation of a particular theme in their work plan, where these leaders are generally Member State representatives. Also there were suggestions to increase the country-supportive dimension of WGs. This includes both the country-specific analytical capacity and assisting clusters of Member States in following up on CSRs.

As many of the respondents to the e-survey have not experienced the new set-up of the ET 2020 Working Groups, the results should be interpreted with care, since some of the concerns may well disappear once the new groups are in operation a bit longer.

In the Working Groups, 54% of the respondents noted that the operational nature of ET 2020 should be enhanced further, versus 24% that it should not be enhanced. Those who responded positively were asked to give an example of a relevant change to the operational nature. In the variety of responses, the implementation of more concrete work programmes, action plans, concrete dissemination and more monitoring of activities and outcomes were mentioned by the majority of people responding.

In the Steering Groups, the share of respondents (42%) who regarded that the operational nature of ET 2020 should be enhanced was 12 percentage points lower than in the Working Groups. 32% indicate it should not be enhanced, compared to 24% in the Working Groups. In particular, more than half of the Education Committee respondents did not consider it necessary. Also here, respondents who responded positively were asked to give an example of a relevant change to the operational nature. Again, a work programme is considered important, as well as better links within and between the ET 2020 actors, with countries, and to the wider public.

There are indications that the new Working Group mandates also help the participants of the Steering Groups to better understand what is done at the Working Group level. In speaking with those responsible for preparing the upcoming Presidency conferences in the coming year (2015), it became clear that they look at the expected outcomes and dates of delivery of ET 2020 Working Groups, thus improving the communication between the expert and policy level.

### 4.2.3 Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks and Technical Expert Groups on indicator and data development

The Expert Groups on indicators and benchmarks include the overarching Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB) as well as 10 more specific technical groups on indicator and data development. It was decided to dissolve 4 of these technical groups in 2013, while creating an additional one on investment in education and training.

The overarching purpose of the SGIB is to advise the European Commission and the Member States on the development of indicators and benchmarks for measuring performance and progress of education and training systems in the European Union. The SGIB uses the Joint Assessment Framework, developed by DG EMPL, thus increasing the usefulness of the reporting for the European Semester.

The SGIB is consulted on the annual Education and Training Monitoring including the country profiles.

The Indicator Expert Groups (IEG) all have separate Work Programmes that are reviewed by the SGIB. The IEGs can be requested to give advice on indicators and benchmarks to the ET 2020 Working Groups.

SGIB members are national representatives who are working on indicators and benchmarks, normally in a ministry of education or likewise. The SGIB meets twice a year. The HLG on Education and Training as well as the Education Committee are informed about the SGIB Work Programme, and about the activities of the SGIB on a yearly basis.

	Indicator Expert Groups	Number of meetings since 2002	Action to be taken regarding their future
	Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB)	37	Continue
1	Adult skills	10	Continue
2	Civics	9	Dissolve
3	Creativity & learning to learn	3	Dissolve
4	Employability	3	Dissolve
5	Entrepreneurial learning	5	Continue
6	ICT	3	Continue
7	Languages	16	Continue
8	Mobility	4	Dissolve
9	Teachers professional development	6	Continue
10	VET	2	Continue
11	Investment in Education and Training	2	Continue

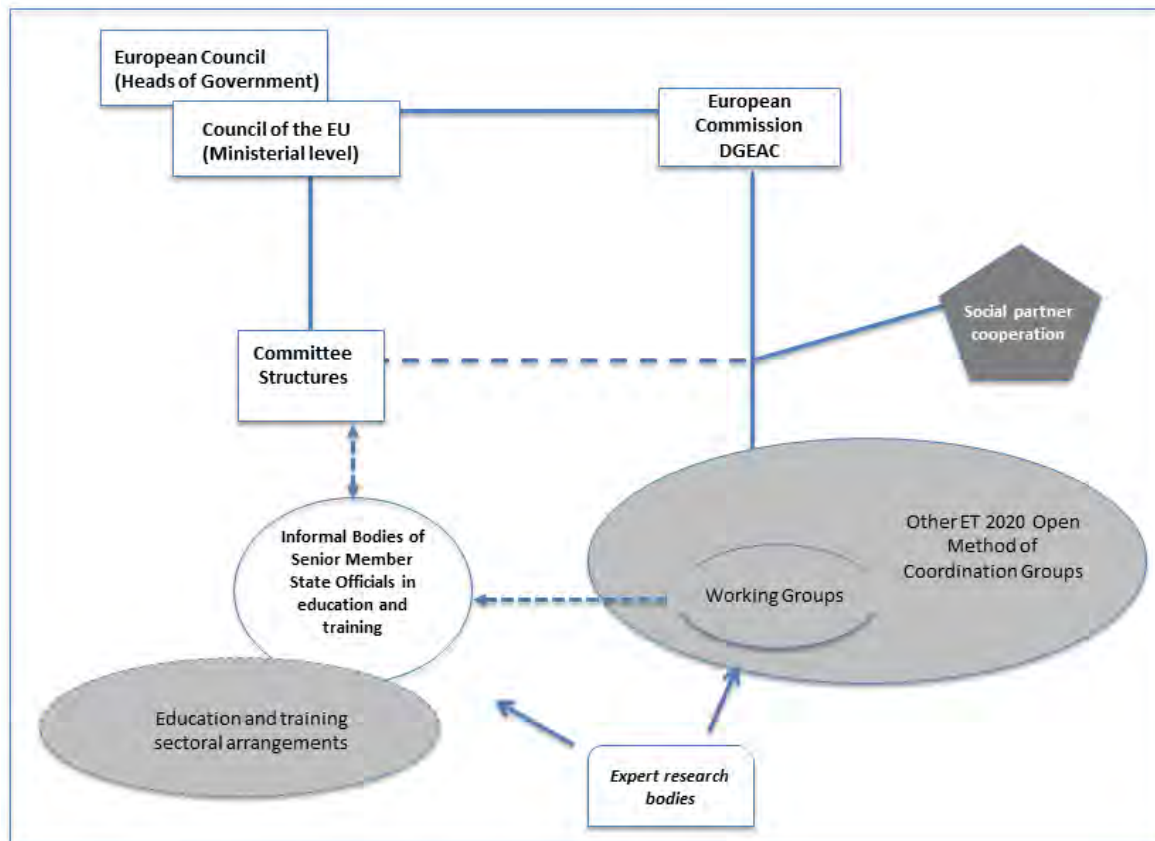
## 4.3 Stakeholder involvement in ET 2020 (JC 3.7)

In this section we examine the degree to which ET 2020 meetings and events enable the integration of pertinent stakeholder views (including views of the social partners) to create a solid basis for reform and adaptation at national level.

### Social partners

Social partners are involved in ET 2020 in a variety of ways and through a variety of bodies, indicated by the shaded sections in Figure 4.4 (dark shading indicates bodies devoted to stakeholders, light shading indicates bodies where stakeholders participate to varying degrees).

**Figure 4.4 Bodies involved in ET 2020 and the role of stakeholders**



In general, stakeholders act as strategic intermediaries between the European level and their communities organised along national lines: they contribute their own perspective and expertise, collate and synthesise ET 2020 outputs, and then transfer knowledge back to national members. It is the national members who take that knowledge into their national policy arenas.

Within this general pattern, however, involvement of European and national social partners can be quite complex. For example, the social partner European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE<sup>50</sup>) which is concerned with teacher trade union policy at all levels of coordination from early childhood to higher education. ETUCE has close links also to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in the context of apprenticeships and VET, and ETUC are members of the CEDEFOP Governing Board<sup>51</sup> as well as ACVT. The ETUCE produces a range of deliverables for members (noted in this evaluation under the dissemination theme), and with those also produced by ETUC national members will develop policy influence. European Social partners and National social partners participate to the meetings of the ACVT, and are therefore well involved in the VET field. In the UK the Trade Union Congress has been represented for the last three years on ACVT<sup>52</sup>. The focus relevant to the TUC was that on apprenticeships, and the Alliance for Apprenticeships<sup>53</sup>, and they contributed to the Policy Guide published in December 2013<sup>54</sup>. Beyond the direct involvement with ACVT the main link for the TUC is ETUC.

<sup>50</sup> [http://etuce.homestead.com/ETUCE\\_AboutETUCE.html](http://etuce.homestead.com/ETUCE_AboutETUCE.html)

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/governance/governing-board.aspx>

<sup>52</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupId=1803&NewSearch=1&NewSearch=1>

<sup>53</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/alliance\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/alliance_en.htm)

<sup>54</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf)

The High-Level meeting on Education and Training between the Commissioner and the European social partners in October 2013, aimed to further reinforce the involvement of social partners in ET 2020 through an Action Plan for 2014. Systematic action is being undertaken at DG EAC to involve the social partners, including frequent meetings at working level on dedicated subjects. Social partners themselves now see EAC as a model and have, for example, suggested that other DGs take this model as an example for informal cooperation.

In relation to the question of the integration of stakeholder views, it should be noted for contextual purposes that the new generation of WGs includes only EU level stakeholders whereas some of the predecessors included both EU and national level stakeholders. Some stakeholders, like Business Europe and ETUC are involved in each WG.

### Civil Society involvement in ET 2020

Civil society are in many respects involved in similar ways as the social partners: they contribute to ET 2020 Working Groups and expert groups, and are solicited for consultations. In some cases they are present as observers (e.g. students and VET providers in ACVT). They are also more broadly involved in specific cases such as the Group of stakeholders for School Education<sup>55</sup>. For example, the European Civil Society Platform on Life-Long Learning (EUCIS-LLL), an umbrella association of European organizations in the field of education and training, participates in the ET 2020 Working Group on Transversal Skills and in the EQF advisory group and the Group of Stakeholders for School Education. EUCIS-LLL is closely following ET 2020, and its annual conference in June 2014 was focusing on ET 2020 mid-term review<sup>56</sup>. With funding from the Lifelong Learning Programme, EUCIS-LLL has also been developing the LLL-HUB, a network of relevant stakeholders in the field of Lifelong Learning, engaging 10 stakeholders from different Member States including social partners, policy makers and civil society organisations<sup>57</sup>. Apart from the social partners and civil society, a range of other European bodies are involved in ET 2020, for example European Schoolnet (EUN), which is discussed further below.

Since 2008 the Commission has funded an annual Forum, where civil society and other stakeholders in education, training and youth are invited. Until 2012 the Forum was organised by civil society organisations (EUNIC). In order to strengthen the links between the Commission and the stakeholders, the Commission decided to take the lead and organise the Forum, as stronger cooperation was requested in the 2012 Joint Report on European Cooperation in Education and Training.<sup>58</sup> The European Education, Training and Youth Forum now includes a wider and more targeted group than before. It offers to a wide range of stakeholders and policy-makers a platform to exchange their views. The findings from the Forum are transmitted for information to the Council.

Year	Title	Main theme
2008	First Stakeholders' Forum	Preparation of an updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training
2009	Second Stakeholders' Forum	Collect stakeholders' points of views on the updated strategic framework for education and training 2009-2010 and on the 2009 Year on Creativity and Innovation
2010	Third Stakeholders' Forum	Aimed to consult European stakeholders' on the future of the programmes Lifelong Learning, Youth in Action and Erasmus Mundus.
2011	Fourth Stakeholders' Forum on priority areas of the second ET2020 cycle	Progress made during the first ET2020 cycle and to make concrete proposals on the priority areas of the second cycle

<sup>55</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=1916>

<sup>56</sup> [http://www.eucis-lll.eu/eucis-lll/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/EUCIS-LLL\\_Background\\_ET2020.pdf](http://www.eucis-lll.eu/eucis-lll/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/EUCIS-LLL_Background_ET2020.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.eucis-lll.eu/action/projects/the-lifelong-learning-hub-lll-hub/>

<sup>58</sup> [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012XG0308\(01\)&qid=1406036622016&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012XG0308(01)&qid=1406036622016&from=EN)

Year	Title	Main theme
2012	European Education and Training Forum 2012	1) Education and training aspects of Europe 2020 and 2) The future Erasmus for All programme
2013	Forum 2013 – Working together for reforms	The new Erasmus+ programme, Skills and jobs
2014	2014 European Education, and Training	Mid-term stocktaking of ET 2020 and EU Youth Strategy

The Forum brings together around 350 people, from relevant stakeholder organisations in 2 EU Member States, at national and regional level. In 2014 there are 400 participants, and it is oversubscribed each year. The group for 2014 consists of representatives from:

- National and regional authorities responsible for Education, Training and Youth and other authorities competent in areas such as Finance, Employment and Social Affairs;
- Member States' experts involved in the relevant OMC ET 2020 Working Groups;
- Learning providers;
- Education and Training stakeholders;
- Youth organisations;
- Civil Society organisations;
- Social Partner organisations and Entrepreneurs bringing in the perspective of skills and labour market conditions; and
- Selected beneficiaries of past and present programmes, to show how projects can have impact and help in developing policy.

To ensure alignment with other ET 2020 instruments, members of Working Groups and the Education Committee are invited as well. The selection for invitees is done by the sectoral divisions within DG EAC: there is no “fixed” list, and it depends on the topic of the Forum as to who is invited. In 2013 for example, Erasmus+ was an important topic. Therefore people who work with Erasmus at the programme and project level were invited as well. Topics are determined by DG EAC.

The set-up of the 2014 Forum is such, that the views, expertise and opinions of participants are shared with the Commission. The group breaks up in 10 workshops. In smaller work groups, short presentations by experts and Commission staff are given, and the group is asked for feedback.

The annual European Education, Training and Youth Forum leads to conclusions that are useful for the Commissions own work, and key messages are used in for example in the Joint Report or for improving programmes. A report with the key messages of the 2013 Forum was sent to the High Level Group on Education and Training. The function of the messages is to inspire the work at EU level through the ET 2020 Working Groups, the DG meetings, cooperation with social partners and implementation of the Erasmus+ programme. Besides the Annual Forum, there are specific sectoral fora: one for VET, and one on University-Business cooperation.

One of the benefits of the Forum, is that contacts between Commission and a wide variety of stakeholders are facilitated. As a result of the Forum, stakeholder organisations are now much more actively engaged with the Commission. Regular meetings, up to once per month, take place with Commission staff to discuss relevant developments, on topics like Erasmus+, Opening up Education, Rethinking Education and recommendations under the European Semester.



## Value of input from stakeholders for ET 2020

Figures from the e-survey (see tables below) show TWG participant views on the involvement of stakeholders. 84% believe that stakeholder representation has been good or better, whilst 83% rate the taking into account of stakeholder views as good or better. Furthermore, according to 85% of the respondents, the relevant stakeholder views are well or very well integrated in the outputs. The similarity in these figures in the 'chain' from participation, through integration of views in meetings to the integration of views into outputs is taken to be a very positive sign in relation to the effectiveness of ET 2020 meetings and events as a whole: there is no 'loss' of stakeholder input during the process. Also, the response patterns are similar for the current Working groups and former TWG.

There is a small minority of respondents who believe that stakeholder involvement could be improved. A response 'bad' may in some contexts give cause for concern but given the enormous thematic and stakeholder heterogeneity of the ET 2020 landscape it would be illogical to expect satisfaction rates to be at 100%. The interviews shed light on the factors that may lie behind the 17% 'bad' in terms of identifying factors hindering the integration of views (discussed below).

### 14.5. How would you rate the content of the meetings in terms of:

Representation of key stakeholders in meetings

(Each respondent could choose only ONE response per sub-question.)

Response	Total	% of responses	%
1 Very bad	4		3 %
2 Bad	18		13 %
3 Good	81		58 %
4 Very Good	36		26 %
<b>Average: 3,07 — Median: 3</b>			
<b>Total respondents: 139</b> <b>Skipped question: 0</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0% <input type="checkbox"/> 20% <input type="checkbox"/> 40% <input type="checkbox"/> 60% <input type="checkbox"/> 80%	

### 14.6. How would you rate the content of the meetings in terms of:

The extent to which stakeholders' views are taken into account





(Each respondent could choose only ONE response per sub-question.)

Response	Total	% of responses	%
1 Very bad	3		2 %
2 Bad	21		15 %
3 Good	83		60 %
4 Very Good	32		23 %
<b>Average: 3,04 — Median: 3</b>			
<b>Total respondents: 139</b> <b>Skipped question: 0</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> 0% <input type="checkbox"/> 20% <input type="checkbox"/> 40% <input type="checkbox"/> 60% <input type="checkbox"/> 80%	

## 20.2. How would you rate the resulting material (policy handbooks, guidelines, reports, etc.) in terms of:

Integration of all relevant stakeholder views

(Each respondent could choose only ONE response per sub-question.)

Response	Total	% of responses	%
1 Very bad	4		3 %
2 Bad	16		12 %
3 Good	92		68 %
4 Very good	23		17 %
<b>Average: 2,99 — Median: 3</b>			
<b>Total respondents: 135</b>		<div> <div>0%</div> <div>20%</div> <div>40%</div> <div>60%</div> <div>80%</div> </div>	
<b>Skipped question: 0</b>			

In interpreting these figures, we need to be mindful that they represent all participants, and that they need to be set against the views of participants from social partner or civil society organisations. Indeed, e-survey results indicate less positive views from the later. 77% of them said that their views are taken into account, only 66% judge their representation good or better, and 68% thought that the ET 2020 resulting material integrated well the civil society and social partner outputs.

Figures from the e-survey also give an indication of the extent to which participation in ET 2020 meetings and events stimulates the formation of on-going contacts amongst stakeholders. This provides essential context for understanding how stakeholders might be further involved in ET 2020. 95% of e-survey respondents stated that participation had helped them to build or maintain a network to some degree, and 70% stated that thanks to participation they regularly or often cooperated with stakeholders in the own country on specific issues. The ability of ET 2020 to stimulate sustained cooperation and networks is impressive. Naturally, the figures for cooperation outside an individual respondent's MS are lower. There are natural barriers, and 'transaction costs' are higher and cooperation depends on perceptions of common issues and belief that cooperation will lead to helpful solutions to those issues. Nonetheless, 52% often or regularly stay in touch with contacts in other MS, 57% often or regularly follow initiatives in other MS. The challenge evidently comes in translating these levels into active cooperation since only 29% of respondents regularly or often cooperate with stakeholders on specific issues in other MS.

To appreciate the elements needed to ensure a good level of stakeholder involvement, we can turn to the VET field.

### An example of successful stakeholder engagement

In the VET field, there is a strong platform and network for stakeholders supporting what takes place within the ET 2020 OMC, the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT). Each MS may have three representatives on the ACVT - from government, trade unions and employer organisations. This is combined with steering of the relevant VET working groups by the DGVT meetings, and a well-developed policy process (Copenhagen) supported by an EU agency (CEDEFOP) whose governing body also represents the social partners. Relevant stakeholders (including social partners) are therefore part-and-parcel of policy development at many stages. This was exemplified by EfVET, EVTA, EVB and EUproVET which signed a joint declaration to express their appreciation for the Bruges Communiqué in 2010. VET therefore demonstrates how a coherent group of actors can provide leadership in the context of policy reform and maximise the integration of stakeholder views.

It is difficult to assess in a general sense the extent to which stakeholders as a whole act as effective multipliers of support for proposed reforms stemming from ET 2020 on account of their enormous variety. As we noted at the start of this section, stakeholders act as strategic intermediaries between the European level and their communities which are organised along national lines, but, within that general pattern they vary in terms of how they engage with ET 2020.

However, we can gain insights from particular examples of which European Schoolnet (EUN) provides a helpful illustration. EUN is “a network of 30 European Ministries of Education” whose key stakeholders include “schools, teachers, researchers, and industry partners”<sup>59</sup>. EUN is focused on professional development, and the network of Ministries decides the EUN agenda. There is extensive background briefing provided to members by EUN so members have a strong professional trust in EUN when agendas are being developed. This results in initiatives such as innovations in classrooms, with resources such as a creative classroom laboratory<sup>60</sup>.

EUN is a member of the new ET 2020 Working Group on Transversal Skills because its expertise corresponds to the mandate of this group. Since involvement depends on the match between the profile and the mandate of the Working Groups, involvement if EUN is not identical in all groups. A school-level priority is the European Commission's eTwinning<sup>61</sup> platform because it is driven by teachers and can be considered as a best practice to involve and learn from key stakeholders and actors.

EUN acts as an intermediary, disseminating relevant ET 2020 outputs to its members. EUN also illustrates the fact that stakeholders develop initiatives in line with their own agenda, which have little or no formal connection with ET 2020, but nevertheless support ET 2020 priorities. The European Schoolnet (EUN) Committee on Innovation in Schools uses experts to develop a skills assessment for countries which closely links to ET 2020 priorities but is not directly driven by the framework.

### Factors hindering integration of stakeholder views

Despite the success of ET 2020 in integrating stakeholder views, interviewees identified a range of factors hindering such integration. (These factors are also of more general relevance to the issue of the efficient and effective operation of the ET 2020 OMC.)

The first hindering factor relates to ‘**place**’, and the challenges of geography, staff time, and travel. The OMC groups have meetings largely though not exclusively in Brussels. ET 2020 Working Groups old and new show activities, such as Peer Learning activities, taking place across the Union and other groups, for example the EQF Advisory Group, have meetings at many different locations. The European Presidencies also provide opportunities for OMC groups to hold their meetings around Europe. Although some interviewees saw the issue in terms of meetings being held in Brussels (as opposed to elsewhere), the issue of where meetings are held is actually more generally about the availability of time to travel to locations, and the elapsed time away from workplace versus the opportunity cost in participating<sup>62</sup>. However, interviewees were not broadly in favour of carrying out meetings remotely, for example using conference call technology. While remote communication is possible to supplement physical meetings, most OMC groups (see the next paragraph) have a large group of participants (an outcome of ensuring representativeness) and difficulties with the stability of participation (see the continuity factor) mean that the social chemistry of a group may also be unstable, making it challenging to operate at a distance.

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.eun.org/home?sessionid=326808378C6F6D10C550227CE6F9FBE4>

<sup>60</sup> <http://creative.eun.org/>

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>

<sup>62</sup> The challenge is no different whether meetings are held in Brussels or elsewhere. Indeed there would arguably be merit in holding meetings in Brussels on a regular basis to reap some benefit in terms of predictability.

The second factor relates to **group size**, and, more specifically, to the balance between two factors: the need to include all relevant 'voices' and the risk that groups become too large to enable effective discussions. The potential membership of groups is derived from the Member States, and a range of social partners and other representative actors. Patterns of membership are very varied, reflecting a range of factors including the interests of Member States and social partners and the topics under discussion. For example<sup>63</sup>, the Expert Group on factors affecting learning mobility has registered participants from 8 MS, whilst the ECVET Users' Group has 17 'organisations'<sup>64</sup>, and all 28 MS represented with, in total, 67 registered MS participants. Some interviewees also identified further participation needs, for example arguing that some important stakeholders in VET are seldom being heard, namely the recipients, the people who are being trained, as against the policy-makers and providers.

The third factor relates to **continuity** in participation between meetings. Sending substitutes to meetings is reported to be an issue due to staff changes, workplace pressures (inability to release time to participate), or a decision to send a colleague whose remit more closely matches the theme of a meeting. It is difficult to evaluate robustly the scale of this issue<sup>65</sup>, and the following examples illustrate the variations in participation that can occur:

- As noted above, the ECVET Users' Group has 67 registered MS participants and 17 'organisations'. At its meeting held on 13 March 2014 there were 6 participants from the EC, 9 organisation representatives and 19 MS representatives; and
- The Transversal Skills WG has participation by 17 organisations, and 27 MS with 35 registered MS participants. In the 29-30 January 2014 meeting participants from 20 countries and 8 organisations were represented.

The final factor concerns the interaction between **agenda planning, national consultation, and OMC actor engagement**. Interviewees emphasised that agendas and background papers were often received too near to the actual meeting dates to allow them sufficient time to consult 'internally'.

At national level, the way **Member states interact with stakeholders generally** in the field of education policy is very diverse. Involvement often depends on tripartite arrangements between governments, educational institutions and companies, as well as on how competences are spread across government, e.g. regions are often competent in VET. Stakeholders can be involved in direct consultation in policy settings, participation in consultative councils and coordination mechanisms. Equally, EU requirements can provide the basis for stakeholder involvement. For example, EU-funded projects are a way to involve stakeholders; indeed, stakeholder involvement is a founding principle of the European Social Fund.

These factors provide a context for stakeholder involvement in European affairs and ET 2020 more specifically. For example, in Finland, which has well-developed social dialogue mechanisms, there is a working group that discusses all EU affairs related to education and training, and involves all relevant Ministries, representative of civil society and social partners. Alongside such general arrangements, stakeholders are involved in specific issues. In Finland working groups involving stakeholders have been organised at the Ministry level on topics such as EQF and Erasmus+; strong efforts are made to ensure a consensual development of education policies. In Germany, the European Quality Framework was developed by the Ministry of Education and the Kultusministerkonferenz, with continuous input from social partners, industry organisations, expert practitioners and academics.

<sup>63</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm> (Checked June 1 2014)

<sup>64</sup> This is the generic terms used by the 'Register' site to denote non-MS participants such as social partners etc.

<sup>65</sup> The minutes of meetings across many groups do not always report attendance, and only rarely are names of participants identified, which also makes it difficult to assess the extent of substitution.

In more general terms, a challenge for ET 2020 is to cope with the **lack of clarity about the different levels of responsibility and capacity** within the Member States. Too little thought is put into identifying which actors would have the competencies to tackle specific challenges. Therefore, the problem formulation in the Education Council already provides a challenge, which only becomes magnified in the decision process on appropriate instruments to tackle challenges. In summary, more differentiation between the different levels of government prior to taking action could lead to much more successful outcomes than the one-size-fits all approach currently taken by the Commission.

The **added value of ET 2020 regarding engagement techniques is not straightforward**. In particular, in countries where participation of stakeholders is limited, such as Portugal, Italy and Spain, there is no evidence of an increased engagement of stakeholders at governance level on account of ET 2020. For instance, in Spain, the Educational Sectoral Conference<sup>66</sup> is mainly used for reporting and disseminating results related to ET 2020, but it is not a platform directly used for policy-making with very limited stakeholder participation.

Some effects can be visible in the VET sector, where strengthened employability through a greater private sector involvement is one of the ET 2020 priorities. The effect of ET 2020 is illustrated by the Portuguese case where links between education and the labour market are increasing, through the activities of the new National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQUEP). This public agency coordinates policy implementation in the field of education and vocational training of young people and adults, as well as develops and manages the National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences. The agency collaborates with social partners and local authorities to develop priority areas for education, training and ways into employment. However, such links were already on the agenda i.e. to develop labour market relevant training, the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (National Employment Agency) has developed protocols with a number of private and state-owned companies, employer organisations, and other social partners as active partners.

In summary, stakeholders are engaged in ET 2020 in a variety of ways and most stakeholders, along with most ET 2020 participants, believe that their views are adequately taken into account, although if we use stakeholder perceptions as a measure then there is evidently room for improvement. Recent changes such as those to the WGs, the introduction of the Forum, and the increasing involvement of the European social partners, are all helping to move in the direction of having a more systematic approach to stakeholder engagement than hitherto, which is to be welcomed.

#### **4.4 Role of governance bodies in aligning ET 2020 with Europe 2020 and the European Semester**

The 2012 Joint Report proposed to “*step up cooperation between the Education Committee and the Economic Policy Committee, Employment Committee and Social Protection Committee ... [to] ensure that ET 2020 feeds in to the Europe 2020 process, including in terms of the use of monitoring indicators*”. A number of Council conclusions (notably those of February 2013 and 2014) stressed the importance of increased cooperation between the Education Committee and EMCO to ensure a better alignment of ET 2020 with Europe 2020.

##### **Cooperation between Education Committee and EMCO**

The Education Committee is part of the Council structure, preparing Council agendas and papers. It has no task formally in the European Semester. In contrast, EMCO is not part of the Council structure, but is an advisory body with responsibility for the multi-lateral surveillance of the CSR's. In this role it provides opinions to the Council. Perceiving that it lacked requisite expertise to conduct this multi-lateral surveillance in relation to education-related CSR's, EMCO asked the Education Committee to support its work and initiated a joint review process already in the 1st European Semester.

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.mecd.gob.es/ministerio-mecd/organizacion/organismos/conferencia-sectorial-educacion.html>

This is technically an ad hoc arrangement by the chairs of the Education Committee and EMCO. In reaching an evaluative judgement on these arrangements it needs to be taken into account that the cooperation is unique: for example CSRs with a research component are handled by ECOFIN, with no input from DG RTD.

Each Semester cycle, EMCO runs a set of review meetings as part of its multi-lateral surveillance, e.g. during the last cycle these included meetings on the "Youth Guarantee" and "Higher Education and wider education reforms". EMCO invites the Education Committee to the events related to some of the education-related CSR's. The review of CSRs takes place using a multi-lateral surveillance method, with Member States organised into pairs of reviewing and reviewed countries, with all other members contributing to the discussion. The reviewed country presents what action it has taken in relation to its CSRs. The reviewing country critically assesses the actions, whilst it is also open to all other Member States to ask questions. The chair of the meeting draws conclusions for each CSR, outlining the scope for future action.

In terms of the effectiveness of these arrangements, interview and documentary evidence (from internal reviews) suggests that cooperation between EMCO and the Education Committee has improved significantly. It also suggests that there is scope to make improvements. While the method is useful for EMCO's production of an opinion on the balance of the CSRs, the time and structure of meetings is less useful to individual Member States, and countries are less willing to be critical of one another than in the employment field. Nonetheless, the outputs from these review meetings are useful to EMCO which uses them as inputs to its work in the one-month period between the European Commission proposing CSRs and their adoption by the Council.

In relation to the Director-General peer reviews so far organised (VET and schools), the chair of EMCO has attended the one on VET and signalled that if they prove to be useful they may be used in the long run not only to complement but also to replace discussions in the EMCO-led joint reviews. Advantages of the DG peer reviews are:

- They are attended by senior level decision-makers with expertise in the field. EMCO attendees are not necessarily experts in education and training, being from employment or labour ministries, so the level of debate tends to be more detailed in the DG peer reviews;
- There is longer to discuss CSR's and the issues they raise: there is only 45 min to discuss a Member State's CSR in the EMCO reviews; and
- There is no set structure and more detail reports can be produced.

Participants in the DG peer reviews have generally found them to be beneficial (as noted in the reports produced) and EMCO has already used the outputs from the peer reviews.

### **Integrating the different elements of ET 2020**

Once CSRs have been adopted by Council, the challenges they raise are raised by DG EAC in the Working Groups and discussed. The new Working Group mandate has strengthened this process. However, it is important to note that Working Group attendees are not necessarily involved in the European Semester or National Reform Programmes at home. Employment ministries sometimes deal with the education-related CSRs, which is a potential weakness in the chain from OMC outputs to action in Member States. In this context the Working Groups are an opportunity to make the attendees aware of CSRs.

Higher Education provides a good example of how the different elements of ET 2020 can be sequenced with respect to the CSRs (which actually predates the new mandates). The Higher Education Working Group identifies the challenges stemming from the CSRs and organises country-focused workshops (previously PLAs). Reports from the country-focused workshops are made to the Working Group and DGHE, the latter of which then determines topics to be dealt with by the Working Group over the following 6 months. This approach is generally reported to be effective in terms of its clarity and transparency.

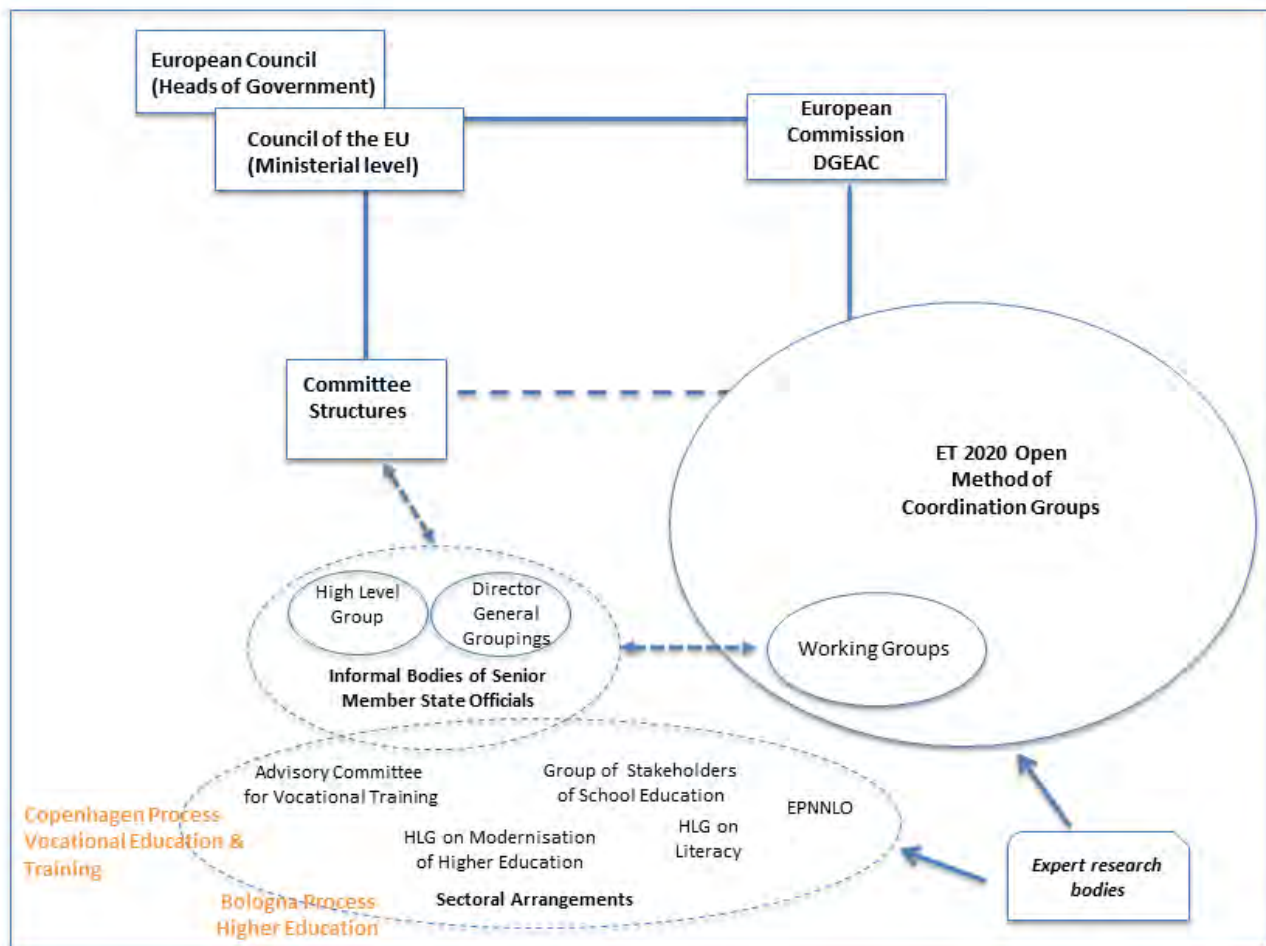


## 4.5 Governance bodies in relation to the sectoral agendas (JC 3.2)

This section examines the extent to which ET 2020 governance (Figure 4.5) has been successful in effectively coordinating, tuning and streamlining ET 2020 with the various sectoral agendas in education and training to help reinforce the overall strategy. It also explores the factors hindering this process.

Amongst the issues that affect how effectively ET 2020 is coordinated with sectoral agendas two are particularly important: (i) the 'ownership' of the sectoral agendas; and, (ii) how they interface with the formal governance structures and informal OMC processes.

**Figure 4.5 Bodies and relationships relevant to sectoral agendas**



As was shown in the section on the relevance of ET 2020 objectives to sectoral agendas, the sectors exhibit wide variation in the way they are configured at European level. A consequence of this is that in relation to the schools and adult agendas the EC is the single European point for developing a shared work programme. In the case of schools, the EC helps to identify specific themes: for example, teacher education, and to facilitate MS action. In adult education, the EC has played an important role in leading the agenda at European level to encourage the development of the sector in many MS. The higher education agenda shows strong ownership by the HE community itself through the Bologna process. In VET, the Copenhagen process is an EU process (contrary to Bologna) with a very strong ownership of the main stakeholders: Member States, Social Partners and the Commission governed by ACVT and DGVT, linked to overall ET 2020 framework through identical strategic objectives adapted to vocational education and training. These patterns have had an effect on the functioning of and topics addressed by the WGs.

Significantly, sectoral structures do not impinge on the formal governance structures as they exist for ET 2020. As we note elsewhere, the Education Committee is a Working Party of the Council and it prepares all items that come on the agenda of the Education Council, although in practice much of the substantive impetus comes from the Commission. The Committee mostly works on the basis of Commission texts.

There is no formal input from the HLG or DG meetings in the Education Committee which might otherwise provide a direct link into sectoral activities, although sometimes there are informal political discussions in the HLG on topics that will later be the subject of a formal Commission Communication which will be addressed to the Council, i.e. to the Education Committee. As we discuss in the section on governance in general, the HLG sometimes discusses matters linked to particular sectors, but its discussions are typically more general. Indeed, interviews revealed that there can be disquiet amongst members of DG groupings that the HLG discusses sectoral issues since HLG members are generalists and lack sector-specific knowledge. Sectoral issues are discussed by the three DG groupings.

Notwithstanding the lack of formal connections within the governance structures, as was shown in the section on the relevance of ET 2020 objectives to sectoral agendas, participants in governance structures in general show good awareness of the ET 2020 objectives. Indeed, looking across the bodies involved in ET 2020, the knowledge of Education Committee members was amongst the highest and widest across all the objectives, along with the High Level Group and the DG Groupings.

This suggests a good foundation of knowledge to support a process of coordination. However, when it comes to more specific and practical matters of the extent to which ET 2020 priorities are taken into account, the figures begin to tail off. Thus, 56% of Education Committee members stated that they can focus on ET 2020 priorities 'very much' or 'to a large extent', with slightly higher percentages for the HLG and DG Groupings. Further, only 40% of Committee members stated that in their meetings they are able to focus on the link between ET 2020 and Europe 2020 'very much' or 'to a large extent', compared to 47% of all Steering Group respondents, and again lower than for the HLG and DG Groupings.

Even though the priorities or links with Europe 2020 are not always the main focus of the meetings, the majority of respondents is convinced that the outcomes of their meetings, both steering group and working group meetings, have a positive effect on the alignment of policy in their own national or institutional context with the objectives of ET 2020. Overall, 34% of the SG respondents indicates a strong effect (very much) and another 34% a moderate effect (somewhat). The total share is highest for the HLG (87%), with the DG Groupings having a notably high share of 'very much' responses (just under 50%) and lowest for the ACVT (59%). In the Working Groups, respectively 24% and 47% indicate 'very much' and 'somewhat' better alignment.

Although we have to treat these data with caution, they do suggest that in the groupings of the DG meetings, and especially the HLG, the senior levels of the participants enables them to situate their discussions in an ET 2020 and Europe 2020 context and the bigger political context.

It is evident that the work of the WGs reflects to some extent the configuration of sectors at EU level. Thus before the advent of the new generation of WGs, schools activity focused on four topics: early school leaving; early childhood education and care; mathematics, science and technology; and, teacher professional development). Also on adult education there were two topics, quality and financing. Of these topics, the evidence points to the work on early school leaving being very effective. Reasons for this include: the strong impetus stemming from the topic being a Europe 2020 headline target and the subject of many CSRs giving MS a direct and pressing imperative to gain knowledge; its clarity of focus; the undertaking of sound 'mapping' research to provide data to underpin the work, including surveys of MS (e.g. on data collection methods and practices); and, a clear work programme and timetable driven by the need to show improvements in CSRs.

In contrast, in VET, which already has an established research capacity (in and through CEDEFOP) and stakeholder joint working practices (e.g. through CEDEFOP workshops linked to research topics), WG activity was limited to one topic, training the trainers, where the WG could add value.

In higher education, there are a number of groups working on complementary issues under ET 2020 on the one hand and the Bologna process on the other. The Bologna Follow-up Group is supported by its own (in some cases ad hoc) working groups on e.g. ECTS and the pathfinder group on automatic recognition (both chaired by the European Commission), mobility, social dimension, lifelong learning (with representatives of the participating countries, the European Commission and the EHEA stakeholder organisations (EUA, EURASHE, ESU, UNESCO, Education International, ENQA and BusinessEurope).

On the Bologna website, it is written that this inclusive approach is one of the main advantages of the process: *“It is noticeable that the main advantage of the Bologna Process and the present support structures is that they enable the key stakeholders to work together as partners, and having a relatively informal character, thus increasing the sense of engagement and ownership among all participants<sup>67</sup>”,* and effectiveness increases when the same experts participate in both meetings. In the Netherlands, for example, it was explicitly mentioned as an advantage that the same people participate in both processes so as to ensure coordination at national level. In such a context WGs have been used as a means of conducting a comprehensive programme of peer learning activities to add value to what takes place through Bologna. Over 2012-2013 two peer-learning activities (PLAs) were run per annum plus a ‘light’ PLA back-to-back with WG meetings. Topics covered included funding, drop-out, teaching excellence, modes of learning and teaching, and recognition.

In summary, whilst there are few formal linkages between ET 2020 and sectoral agendas, informal connections have been made and have been tuned to the ‘state of play’ in each sector, reflecting the flexible nature of the ET 2020 OMC. At the same time, current arrangements place the onus on the Commission to ensure coordination between the different agendas. For example, in the absence of a formal link from the informal groupings to the Education Committee at European level, one connection is via the EC seeking views on forthcoming Communications. A strengthened relationship between the informal groupings and the Education Committee would be beneficial, and this has been recognised in the recent development of the new generation of WGs which are structured around sectors and where the HLG and DG groupings have been given a key task in determining which results from the WGs under their responsibility should be presented to the Council via the Education Committee<sup>68</sup>.

The link between sectors and ET 2020 could also be enhanced if each Member State itself achieved better internal coordination of the way it approaches ET 2020. Whilst some MS achieve good coordination, it was a feature of many interviews that many MS officials were unaware of what was happening in ET 2020 because they did not connect with their own colleagues. This has also been recognised in the new generation of WGs and the encouragement given to MS to bring together at least once a year their national representatives involved in the WGs with senior officials and policy makers<sup>69</sup>. Additionally, it might help to ensure this has a sectoral dimension.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=5>

<sup>68</sup> EC (2014) *The New Generation of ET 2020 Working Groups*. Information Document for the HLG on Education and Training, Rome 12-13 June 2014

<sup>69</sup> op cit.

## 4.6 Timing of events and interaction between bodies

Figure 4.6 shows a simplified version of the ET 2020 planning, for a period of 6 months. This highlights the main events and bodies involved in a single Presidency-cycle. Although some of these events take place only once a year (i.e. the Forum and the ET 2020 Monitor), and the European Semester has an annual cycle, the chart illustrates the flow of activities under ET 2020 and the frequency of meetings taking place.

The full planning chart, which is used by DG EAC for preparing and planning events, includes separate columns for each sector: Schools, VET, Adult Education, Higher Education and two transversal themes. Also a separate column is included for the Erasmus+ Committee, which discusses issues at the programme level. The left side of the chart shows the main milestones of the European Semester.

A number of observations can be made based on this simplified chart:

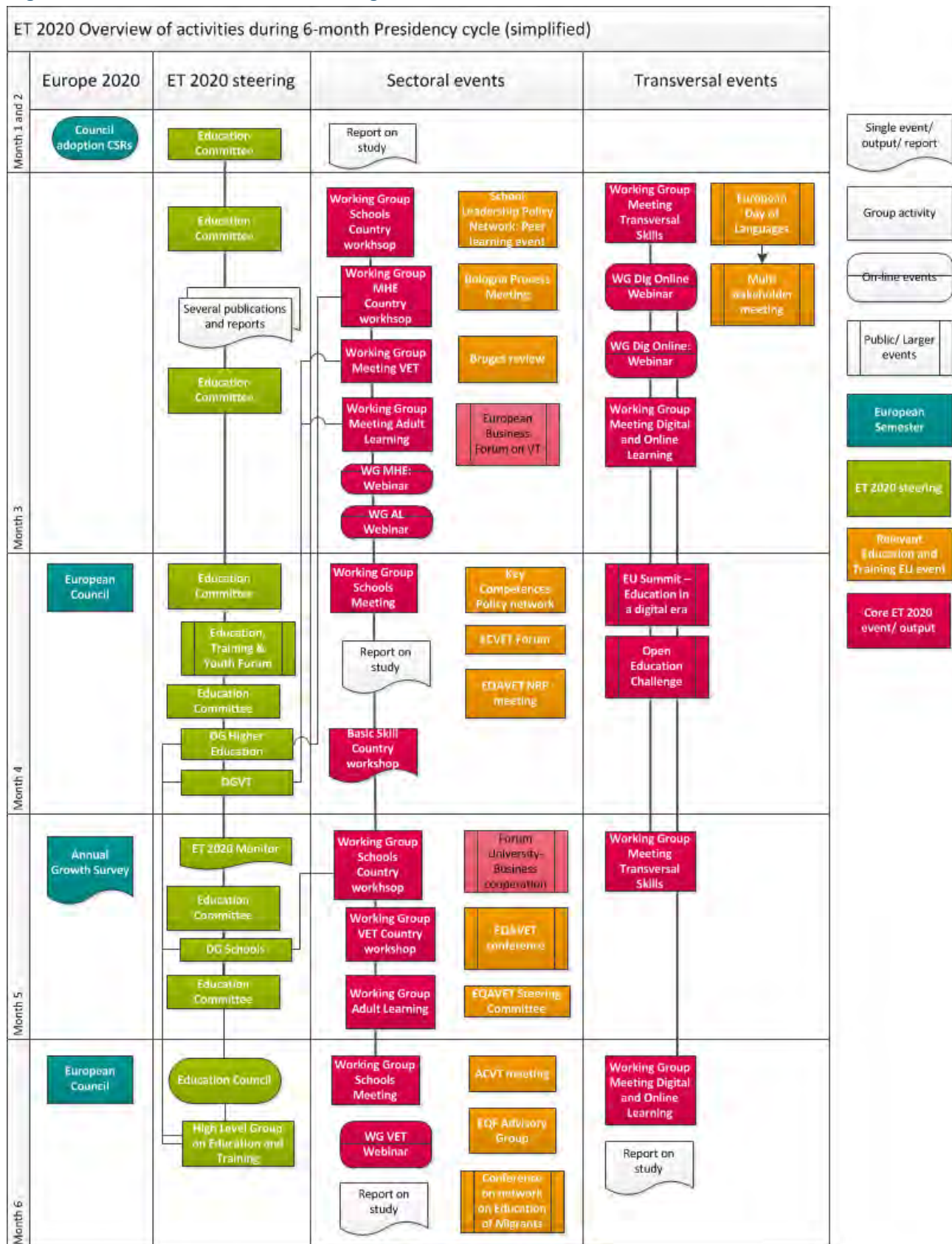
- The European Council meets every two months.
- The Education Committee has the most frequent meetings: on average twice a month. This shows that the Committee is an important body for steering the process, and securing involvement of Member States throughout the year.
- Both the Education Council and the High Level Group on Education and Training meet at the end of the cycle. Other high level groups, like ACVT, also meet in this same month.
- The DG meetings take place prior to these higher level meeting, thus illustrating their preparatory and channelling role.
- The Working Groups do not seem to have a clear fixed timeline nor a predetermined frequency. In the example here, the Working Groups on Schools and Digital and online Learning meet quite a lot, whereas other groups have less meetings planned.
- Besides the ET 2020 “core events” several other important sectoral events are included in the schedule. Whether these give some sort of input for the Working Groups under ET 2020 is not clear.
- Besides physical meetings, quite a number of webinars are planned.

A chart like this helps to show what ET 2020 entails, and how interactions between the various groups can be optimized. We envisage that a chart like this would be presented on the public website, thus helping Member States and relevant stakeholder organisations to align their activities with the broader European agenda.

The chart could be further improved by showing the flows of information and reporting through the various bodies.



**Figure 4.6 Calendar of ET 2020 meetings and events**



## 4.7 Factors explaining the functioning of the OMC (JC 3.5, JC 3.6, JC 3.8)

Figure 4.1 shows the overall model for understanding the functioning of the OMC. We start the analysis with the factors around Individual Learning, and then continue on to the learning being transferred to the national level (within the ministries or institutions) and on to the initial results and longer term results. The following elements of the model are described in more detail.

**Table 4.3: Outcomes and enabling factors explained**

Outcome	Enabling factors
<b>Individual learning (JC 3.5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reaction to OMC events – indicates to what extent participants value the meetings.</li><li>• Motivational to learn – are those involved in the ET 2020 process eager to learn, participate and apply the learning?</li><li>• Ability and Mandate – Do people have enough knowledge and skills? Do they have the mandate to make decisions on behalf of the member state?</li><li>• Motivation for transfer – The willingness to transfer learning from the OMC to the organisation that participants represent</li></ul>
<b>Organisational learning (JC 3.5, 3.6)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Motivation for transfer – The willingness to transfer learning from the OMC to the organisation that participants represent.</li><li>• Transfer climate – To what extent is the environment to which the delegates have to transfer knowledge, able to adopt and change? Which factors facilitate transfer and dissemination?</li><li>• Design for transfer – What strategies are built into the OMC, to ensure proper follow-up and higher chances of real use in practice?</li><li>• Ownership (JC 3.6)</li></ul>
<b>Initial results &amp; Longer term results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Link to wider objectives – To what extent is the topic relevant for the policy context in which the delegates operate?</li><li>• Expected use/ Added value.</li><li>• Dissemination (JC 3.8)</li></ul>

### 4.7.1 Individual learning (JC 3.5)

The total number of people invited to meetings in Brussels, for all Working and Steering Groups together, and including old and new Thematic Working Groups, amounts to almost 1,000 people. This shows that a substantial number people in Europe are actively involved in ET 2020 meetings and events. The variety of ET 2020 meetings and events, both in terms of audience, working methods and topics, and the effort needed for the Commission to run all these meetings, makes it clear that an assessment of these types of meetings is quite useful, particularly to understand which ones fully support Member states, and which meetings are less useful. Answering this question is difficult, since the number of people that can give a comparative perspective is limited. Thus the evaluation judgment is based on views of those closely involved in a variety of ET 2020 meetings and events, and interviewees that were able to give a comparative perspective.



In order to effectively stimulate cross-fertilisation of 'good practice', learning has to take place at several levels. First it has to take place at the level of the individuals who are the 'change agents' in their own country or relevant networks. Those who take part in EU activities and networks under ET 2020 are important target audiences, and carriers of effective transfer of good practices. When these individuals learn from taking part in ET 2020 activities they can transfer knowledge to the organisations in which they work, such as ministries, agencies actively supporting education and training systems, or social partners. Ultimately these organisations have a role to play in disseminating good practices in the wider network surrounding these organisations. To explore these issues, the e-survey asked participants question in both the individual learning that took place, and the organisational learning in their organisations, as a result of participating in the OMC.

In terms of general awareness of the OMC process and its outcomes, most respondents to the e-survey of the TWGs were aware of the Open Method of Coordination process in Education and Training, but only 49% indicated that their awareness on this is high. 16% that their awareness is low. This is partly driven by the difference in responses between the TWG and the new ET 2020 WGs (59% indicated high awareness in the TWG compared to 38% in the new ET 2020 WG). 82% of the respondents to the e-survey in the Steering Groups had either a moderate (43%) or a high knowledge of the open method of coordination. This is slightly lower than the Working Groups, where 49% of the participants were highly aware of the OMC process.

As 'awareness' is the first level of learning, there is some room for improvement. Although the vast majority is aware of the OMC process and its outcomes, still 1 out of 5 (approximately) indicated their awareness is low. These are people working in the OMC. As one interviewee of a successful Working Group mentioned, their group leader spent a significant amount of time in training new entrants about the processes within the OMC. This needs continuous maintenance.

In terms of the scale of mutual learning, respondents of the Working Groups indicated that they acquired in particular knowledge on good practices of peers (82%), new and innovative approaches (61%) and EU common reference tools and approaches (52%), and data and evidence from European agencies, networks and international organisations (46%). Only respectively 13% referred to the Monitor, and 15% to Community Programmes.

The e-survey results show that participants acquire new knowledge and skills that is useful for themselves. It has helped to increase their understanding of the topics discussed (34% very much and 44% to a large extent) and to prioritise ideas (24% very much and 49% to a large extent). The new knowledge and skills are also very helpful for developing policy and practice in the country or policy area, and for building or maintaining a network. The largest effect of contacts established in the Working Groups at national level, is that it enables participants to cooperate with stakeholders in their own country on specific issues: 72% indicate that participation in the Working Groups often or regularly helped to achieve this.

At the level of real (individual) learning taking place within the OMC, the vast majority were positive. It also helps participants to prioritize ideas, to develop policy and practices, and to build and maintain a network. In terms of really changing the landscape in their own countries, the impact is more limited.

### **Reaction to OMC events**

The operationalisation of the exchange of good practice and mutual learning in both the Working and Steering Groups of the OMC was evaluated very positively by the participants in the e-survey in terms of frequency (96% of WG and 92% of SG good to very good), coherence in the agenda (94% and 92%), continuity (93% and 94%), length (89% and 77%). Still positive, but with smaller share, is the time to produce outputs (80% and 72%). The EQF Advisory Committee respondents were more positive than average on continuity of meetings and less positive on length in terms of allowing enough time for discussion and debate.

Many of the interviewees who took part in the OMC processes emphasised the delicate nature of the OMC in education. In looking back at the origin of the OMC in education, several interviewees explain that when the Working Groups started, Member States had to learn how to use the OMC effectively. Exchange of good practice and mutual learning generally depends in the first place on the participation and ownership of the members in the meetings. The operationalisation in an informal setting is a basic condition for this, confirmed clearly by many interviewees as well as in the e-survey open responses, both for the Working Groups and (informal) Steering Groups.

The interviews confirmed the importance of the informal setting in the OMC for all groups, and in particular in the WGs. This informal setting is also linked to the focus on cooperating and developing instead of evaluating. For a large majority of e-survey respondents of the Working Groups (83%) and Steering Groups (72%), the informal setting has a beneficial effect. The positive effect is indicated more often by the respondents from former TWGs (87%) than by those of new ET 2020 WGs (76%). Only 2% in the Working Groups indicated a negative effect and 15% saw no effect. This is 1% and 28% in the Steering Groups. The informal form of operationalising mutual learning is generally agreed to have important benefits, and even to be a basic condition for the OMC in Education and Training. On the other hand, the e-survey responses also identify one disadvantage, namely the risk of WGs lacking decision making mechanisms.

The e-survey results point to the central role of mutual learning in the OMC process of education and training. Participants in this process value the quality and relevance of information exchanged and see the benefits for fostering policy change. The participants to the Working Group meetings are also overall satisfied with the content of the meetings. Very positive ratings for the content of the meeting are given for its quality in terms of relevance and quality of expert speakers (97% good or very good), the amount of expert input in meetings (94%) and quality of discussion and debate in meetings (92%). Also positive is quality in terms of the taking into account Member State involvement in the activities (89%), although 14% of the old TWG respondents indicate bad quality compared to 7% of the new ET 2020 WG respondents, and the representation of key stakeholders in meetings (86%) and the extent to which stakeholders' views are taken into account (87%).

The information and practices shared during meetings is rated positively by the large majority of participants. The specific information and practices shared at the Working Groups was considered good to very good by the e-survey respondents, for example in terms of the relevance to the priorities of the group (95% good or very good, of which a high share of 42% very good) and the level of detail (89%). 87% considered the information and practices shared were based on evidence which is up-to-date and robust (rated as very good or good), and 85% found them inspiring.

### **Motivation to learn**

When asked to rank the main benefits for a MS to participate in ET 2020 Working Groups and bodies, most respondents value the fact that they learn from the practices in other countries, that they acquire new knowledge, and that it strengthens the country's capacity to reform its education and training system. The key benefits mentioned were: Learn from others practice (36%), Acquire new knowledge (26%); and, strengthen my country capacity to reform its education and training system (14%). This is an indication that there is a large gap between what individuals take from the OMC, and what is needed in countries to really reform education and training. In order to strengthen the system capacity to reform, much more is needed.

66% of WG respondents reported that the OMC process results in useful materials (policy handbooks, guidelines, reports etc.) for EU-level education and training policy-makers. 66% of the Working Group respondents rated the outputs usefulness as good, and 26% as very good. The materials are used personally, by colleagues and wider policy-makers. One third of the respondents found the materials are also very much or to a large extent useful for effectively reforming policy.

## Ability

The Thematic Working Groups involved representatives of the national ministries, who are experts in their fields. A number of Working Groups included representatives of national stakeholders – one per country – as well as representatives of the larger European stakeholder organisations (e.g. associations of parents, families, students, etc.). European social partner organisations were also invited.

Overall, the involvement of the participants is evaluated positively by the respondents of the Working Groups in the e-survey. 61% said that most participants attend and share their views. 44% and 33% respectively also find that most participants were active in discussions and work actively towards an integrated outcome.

In the new set-up of ET 2020 Working Groups, implemented from 2014 onwards, the EC asked Member States to send delegates with a clear mandate, who were well-suited to the WG tasks, and suggested a number of criteria for selecting delegates.

In practice, it can be difficult for Member States to find enough capacity, both in quantity and quality, to join all ET 2020 Working Groups. Some Member States mentioned that the mandates for the new Working Groups were introduced in parallel with appointing representatives, thus giving Member States very little time to do a careful selection. Also, engagement of participants is sometimes limited, because of regular workload. This was one of the reasons for reducing the number of Working Groups.

### 4.7.2 Organisational and institutional learning (JC 3.6)

Stakeholders interviewed generally acknowledge that ET 2020 outputs are not meant for broad audiences of education practitioners and partners in Member States. A number of Ministry representatives noted that ET 2020 is a process that should be limited to policy makers. Involvement of too many actors would convert it into a 'social process', while on the contrary it should be kept as a strategic process mainly directed to the Ministries and used for policy-making. Some interviewees involved in the Thematic Working Groups stressed that they were able to use the outputs directly for their own work at the ministry. They use the materials for discussions with colleagues, and in some cases send it through to a wider group of stakeholders.

The WG on Early School Leaving and Teachers was mentioned as very helpful. Another important aspect mentioned is the level of networking that is supported and sustained through ET 2020, both at EU and national level. Several interviewees mentioned that through the participation in ET 2020, it is easier to find interesting practices in other countries that can be useful when developing new policies. The e-survey results point to an overall positive appreciation of exchange of good practices in the Steering and Working Groups of the OMC, and of their influence on national policy reforms. The interviews provide examples to support this, but there were also counter examples where the country context and policy structure is too rigid to implement practices that capitalise effectively on the OMC processes.

## Motivation for transfer

It is important that Member States feel ownership of the process, and commitment from the political level, for example through the DG meetings and mandates, is important. But also the choice of topics, based on real needs in the Member States, should be steered by the Member States.

In the interviews, a number of barriers were identified that correspond back to the types of OMC methods and the related success factors identified. Committed participants with motivation and drive are important to make the exchange and learning process a success. When there is a lack of 'energy' in the group, this is a barrier to effective cross-fertilisation. Similarly, Member States need to see the value-added or common benefit of the process, and a number of practical (availability of the 'right' people for example) and resource-related concerns were identified during interviews that hinder effective participation of all Member States.

Also, it is important that participants expect that their “home country” listens to lessons learned from the OMC, and that there are some clear benefits for the national and regional context. A number of interviewees indicated that the context in their Member State is not favourable in that respect, either due to wider sentiments on the EU or because of legal issues (i.e. limited mandate to act on the basis of the Treaty)..

### **Transfer climate**

The “transfer climate” refers to a number of factors in the participant’s own environment, that either stimulate or inhibit further dissemination and use of outputs.

While response on the learning effects and exchange of information and practices is very positive, 64% of the respondents of Working Groups encountered barriers in implementing or trying to implement changes. This corresponded to 71% of the TWG respondents and 51% of the ET 2020 WG respondents. A lack of resources is mentioned as the most common barrier (66% of the respondents who face barriers). Another barrier was the level of interest of potential receivers (30%) and support within the organisation (23%). WGs have more soft and intangible outcomes: broad consensus, knowledge sharing, understanding difference, peer learning. However, such learning needs to go beyond the individuals. For this reason some have implemented formal feedback processes within their administrations.

Some interviewees also mentioned the limited publicity which ET 2020 generates, which makes it difficult for individuals returning to their ministries to bring the message across. Compared to for example the Innovation scoreboard, PISA and PIAAC, which generate a lot of public attention, the Monitor of ET 2020 was not cited much. This makes it more difficult to disseminate outputs in Member States.

On the opposite side, one TWG coordinator mentioned that the lack of support that some group members receive back in their own ministry, can be an important stimulus to engage in international cooperation and seek support within the ET 2020 strategic framework.

Also the level of political support for certain themes is an important factor. Topics on Teachers are often welcomed by the ministries and receive political support. In one Member State, a separate unit within the Ministry was founded dedicated to Teachers, and substantial resources were allocated. This increased the interest for the work done in the Thematic Working Group. Once the unit was dissolved a couple of years later, interest declined.

Benchmarks play an important role in sensitizing political leaders, and can thus influence the focus of ministries to work on certain themes. Once targets are reached, interest in some cases declines (this was mentioned for example in Member States that made progress on Early School Leaving).

Although from the side of the Commission, there is a limited influence on the ‘transfer climate’ within the Member States, it is useful to take into account the level of support that participants in the OMC receive. There are a number of ways to help participants in transferring their knowledge and experiences to a wider audience. These factors are summarized under ‘Design for transfer’.

### **Design for transfer**

This section looks into the OMC, and how it ensures proper follow-up and higher chances of real use in practice. A great deal of these factors can be influenced by those coordinating the work under the OMC.

The interviews with stakeholders allowed the collection of a substantial number of observations on OMC methods that were effective in the process of learning and exchanging practices between Member States. Factors that influence effectiveness of OMC activities are related to the quality of coordination and facilitation, the frequency of meetings, continuity of themes, the importance of preparation and evidence-based approach, a structured process combined with a strong policy priority, the selection of themes as being a universal issue for all parties, ownership by Member States, the composition of the group, and closeness to sectoral agendas of the sector.

It is mentioned that without the TWGs, there would not have been cooperation between services and experts. Whereas the European Semester, with its CSRs, is strongly political, the mutual learning under ET 2020 facilitates exchange between real experts and those responsible for the education and training system in their country.

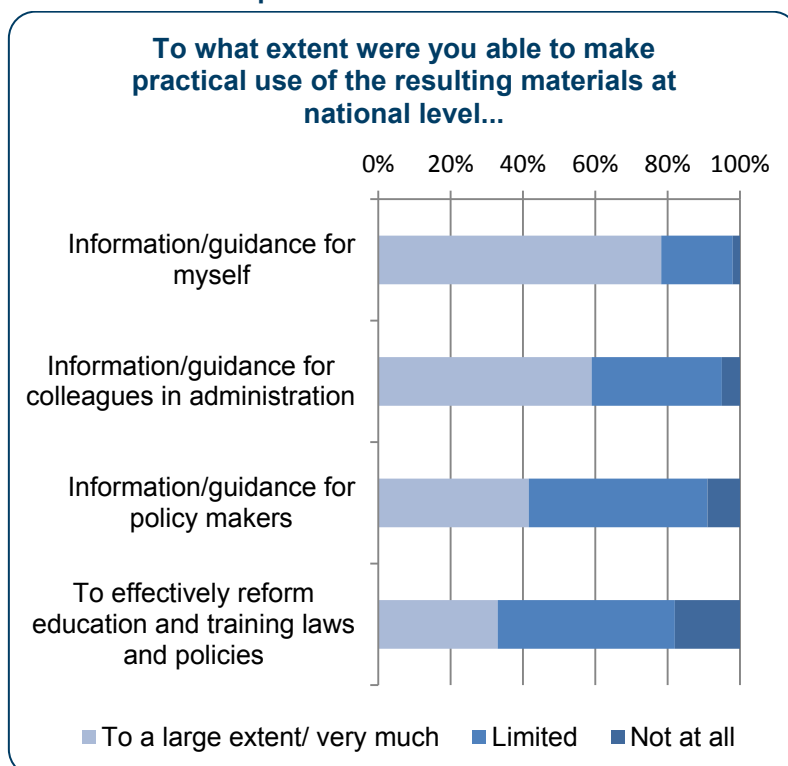
Some forms of mutual learning were seen as more effective than others. The impact of Peer Learning Activities is mentioned by multiple interviewees as a form that produces better outcomes. Often interviewees refer to the work of the OECD in this context, where intensive peer reviews take place, as an even stronger working method. These are all factors that can be influenced through the specific design of an intervention.

The peer reviews under the DG meetings have been subject to discussion and review which has led to modifications to better meet Member State needs but, at the same time, feedback from participants indicates that there are opportunities to improve. For example, feedback from the March 2014 schools policy review highlighted the need for more time for preparation (countries had around one month) and in-depth discussion (there were two rounds of parallel workshops which provided five-and-a-half hours for four Member States in each cluster).

**Composition of groups.** Many of the participants surveyed are positive about the way the Working and Steering Groups operate. However, subtle differences in the composition of groups can determine outcomes. For example it was reported that subgroups with many academics and researchers tended to produce more materials (such as guidelines and handbooks). This is not always considered useful, given the amount of reports that is already being produced. Also the role of the coordinator in enabling mutual learning to occur and the way the groups are facilitated, both in terms of quality, time and resources, is an important factor.

**Usefulness of materials produced.** When asked whether respondents were able to make practical use of the resulting material, 80% of respondents said that the information and guidance they get from ET 2020 has been very useful (38% very much, 41% to a large extent). 20% were less positive. Figure 4.2 shows that respondents valued the outputs highly as guidance for themselves, and less for helping in effectively reforming education and training laws and policies at national level, although also there 1 out of 3 rated the outputs positive in this respect.

**Figure 4.7 Practical use of ET 2020 outputs**





At the level of the Steering Groups, where higher level officials meet, the answers show a very similar pattern. Whereas respondents were quite positive about the usefulness of outputs for themselves and their direct colleagues, it seemed more challenging to use the information as guidance for the wider groups of stakeholders who are involved in policy making and reform. Further clarification on this issue was given by the respondents, when they answered questions on the extent to which the groups in which they participate have helped to shape policies and policy discussions. In the opinion (Figure 4.3) of the majority of the Steering Group participants, the outcomes of the ET 2020 process have contributed somewhat to policy discussion, to new policies and introduction or improvement of practices in the national context. 25% noted that these elements have very much been influenced by the ET 2020 process.

Both the e-survey and the interviews give indications for the user-friendliness ET 2020 outputs. When asked whether their country has been able to use the ET 2020 outputs, to effectively tackle issues identified in the European Semester, 33% of the respondents at Steering Group level, answered positively, 33% answered that the outputs were marginally useful. Only 8% stated that the outputs have not been useful.

The majority of the members of the Working Groups rated the quality of outputs as good (67%) or even very good (24%). Only 8% rated the quality as bad. 68% (good) and 17% (very good) of respondents noted that stakeholder views are well integrated into the materials resulting from the ET 2020 activities.

Certain products and documents have had a clear impact in the field. For example an interviewee from the Thematic Working Group on Teachers had presented about the quality of teacher training, based on the products of the WG, to a conference for teacher training, had endeavoured to incorporate aspects in local teacher training, and had published an article in a journal for teacher trainers. Those with a more critical view on the user-friendliness of outputs mentioned reasons such as whether outputs are really useful is often difficult to assess because much value is internalised by the participants, and it depends how they re-disseminate it.

**Feedback and continued communication in between meetings.** Regarding the outputs of the Working Groups, interviewees regularly mention the lack of real feedback or knowledge loops, or at least the lack of clarity about whether or not such loop exists. A software platform called SINAPSE was installed to keep track of and share TWG outputs. A new platform is currently being developed for the ET 2020 WGs using the Yammer application, based on the principle of social networking. Within the process, coordinators can stimulate further networking and support after and in between meetings.

## Ownership

There is a clear appreciation amongst national level stakeholders that the ET 2020 framework and process is primarily for the benefit of Member States (rather than the European Commission), and that the targets, outcomes and activities of ET 2020 are focussed on improving education and training practice at national rather than European level (although recognising that these are interlinked and mutually inclusive). Linked to this, there is general agreement by the national actors consulted through the country level research that “the opportunity has been given to all Member States to participate and contribute” in the ET 2020 process and that those countries that have participated in various ET 2020 activities feel a sense of ownership. Stakeholders recognised that the more they participated in activities such as the DG groupings and the HLG the more they felt some form of control and influence (and therefore ownership) of the direction of the framework. Those countries who were less involved in ET 2020 meetings and events unsurprisingly felt less ownership and commitment overall.

The topics in Working Groups are defined in a joint manner. DG EAC sets out priorities in the context of ET 2020, Europe 2020 and the CSRs. In the Education Committee and DG groups, the priorities are tested for their relevance, and the DG groupings have responsibility for steering the work of the WGs. The priorities are thus top-down defined towards the WG. Nevertheless, the WGs can make suggestions and communicate ideas upwards. The TWGs also provided opportunities between actors in education and training and other policy fields. For example, in the Thematic Working Group on Early Childhood Education cooperation with DG Justice and DG Research took place, as well as a broad range of social partners and NGOs. In the



Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, sessions were organized with DG SANCO on mental health in schools.

The Commission has made several proposals to increase ownership by Member States, and these were discussed with the High Level Group. The ET 2020 Working Group Mandates were discussed extensively with the HLG and the DG groupings. Each ET 2020 Working Group was “adopted” and received guidance from the HLG and relevant DG groupings. A six-monthly report on the advancement of WG activities is sent to the HLG/ DG groupings as well as the Education Committee. Relevant elements are brought to the attention of the Member States, thus increasing ownership.

The country level research shows that there tends to be more of a feeling of ownership of ET 2020 at the strategic rather than operational level. Social partners, NGOs and other education and training associations consulted with as part of the country level research generally stated they felt less ownership and commitment to ET 2020 and were less likely to feel that they were able to influence its work, activities and direction. This is to be partly expected as ET 2020 activities are primarily focussed on strategic stakeholders rather than education or training practitioners and is partly a reflection of who attends the various ET 2020 events and meetings. However, it does show a need to ensure that deliverables are effectively disseminated effectively to those more at an operational level to ensure that all key bodies that play a role in national reform of education and training systems have some sort of commitment and indirect ownership of ET 2020 - a point dealt with in more detail in the next judgement criterion.

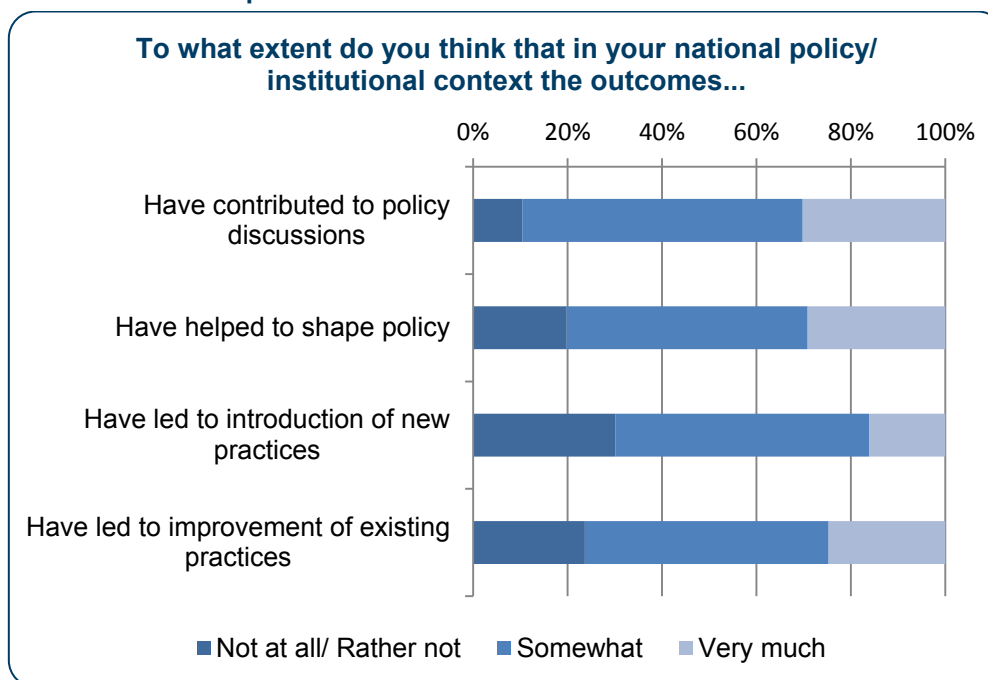
Ownership by Member States of the outcomes was lower, and 68% rated the ownership by Member States as positive, 32% rated this aspect as (very) bad. In terms of the relevance of the outputs to the needs and priorities in a specific policy field (i.e. VET, schools), 88% of respondents from the Working Groups rated this aspect as (very) good. The usefulness for national policy-makers in education and training is also rated positively, with 27% saying this is very good and 56% rating this aspect as good. The usefulness in the longer term was considered good by 59% of the respondents, however 28% of respondents rated this aspect as bad.

One of the recurring themes in the interviews was the delicate balance between the steering of ET 2020 by the Commission, and the ownership of the process by the Member States. Even though ET 2020 is based on conclusions adopted by the Member States in the Council, and is based on a permanent cooperation between the Member State and the Commission, there was a perception among some interviewees (and in some cases what can only be described as a ‘suspicion’) that the Commission was interfering in MS territory. Somehow, Europe 2020 is perceived more as a Council vehicle, and ET 2020 as a Commission vehicle.

#### 4.7.3 Initial results and longer term results (JC 3.8)

The e-survey shows that WG participation has an effect of a continuity of participation and networking for participants. Contacts established in the Working Groups with other Member State participants are maintained often or regularly for 54% of the respondents. 60% of the respondents often or regularly continue to follow initiatives in other countries. However, the largest effect of contacts established in the Working Groups is at national level, to cooperate with other MS stakeholders on specific issues of relevance to their own MS: 72% indicated that participation in the Working Groups often or regularly helps to achieve this.

**Figure 4.8 Use of ET 2020 outputs in the National/Institutional Context**



The e-survey indicates that Working Group meetings facilitate the sharing of good practices: 91% of the respondents gained new insights into good practices in education and training, and 76% considered these practices relevant for the national context. 93% were inspired by their participation in the Working Group to support reforms in education and training in their own policy or institutional context. 9% applied the practice entirely, 43% applied a modified version and 41% applied the underlying idea.

A smaller share of the respondents was aware of the effects in the opposite direction, namely of a practice that is developed in their own country and that is applied in another Member State thanks to the discussions in the Working Groups. 46% (50% of TWG respondents, 37% of ET 2020 WG respondents) were aware of such transfer of good practice, of which again the majority is either in a modified version or applied as underlying idea. Overall, 66% of the respondents reported that the outcomes of the Working Groups have (somewhat or very much) led to the introduction of new practices in their own national context, and 74% noted they have led to improvement of existing practices.

In the Steering Groups, 66% of the respondents reported that the outcomes of the Steering Groups have (somewhat or very much) led to the introduction of new practices in their own national context, and 72% that they have led to improvement of existing practices. Respondents from the EQF Advisory Group were more positive on this than the other Steering Groups. The response pattern overall is very similar to the response pattern of the Working Groups.

### Expected use and Added value

The chances of having an impact at national level, increase when those involved expect to be able to use the outputs, and see the added value. Opinions on this matter vary widely.

At national level, respondents from the steering groups indicate they make practical use of the deliverables, in the first place as information and guidance for him/herself (29% very much and 45% to a large extent), and to a decreasing extent for colleagues in administration (14% and 51%), policy makers (11% and 41%) and finally effective policy reforms (8% and 21%). Comparing this to the response pattern of the working groups, this is very similar with a slight shift to information for others compared to for themselves. Also similar to the working groups, the resulting materials are considered useful at EU level for steering Council Conclusions, Recommendations, and Resolutions by 3% (very much) and 38% (to a large extent) of the respondents of the working groups. 58% of the Education Committee respondents indicate only limited usefulness while 60% of the HLG on Education and Training respondents indicate high usefulness.

Several stakeholders found ET 2020 Thematic Working Groups valuable because of the stimulation to think more broadly and holistically, taking a step back from day to day concerns, and avoiding the tendency of specialists to stay in their field, and the interaction which was enriching at a personal level. The OMC is seen as useful because it permits benchmarking. Experiences of Peer Learning Activities were valued for networking and exchanging strategies. Key dimensions of the added value of ET 2020 include:

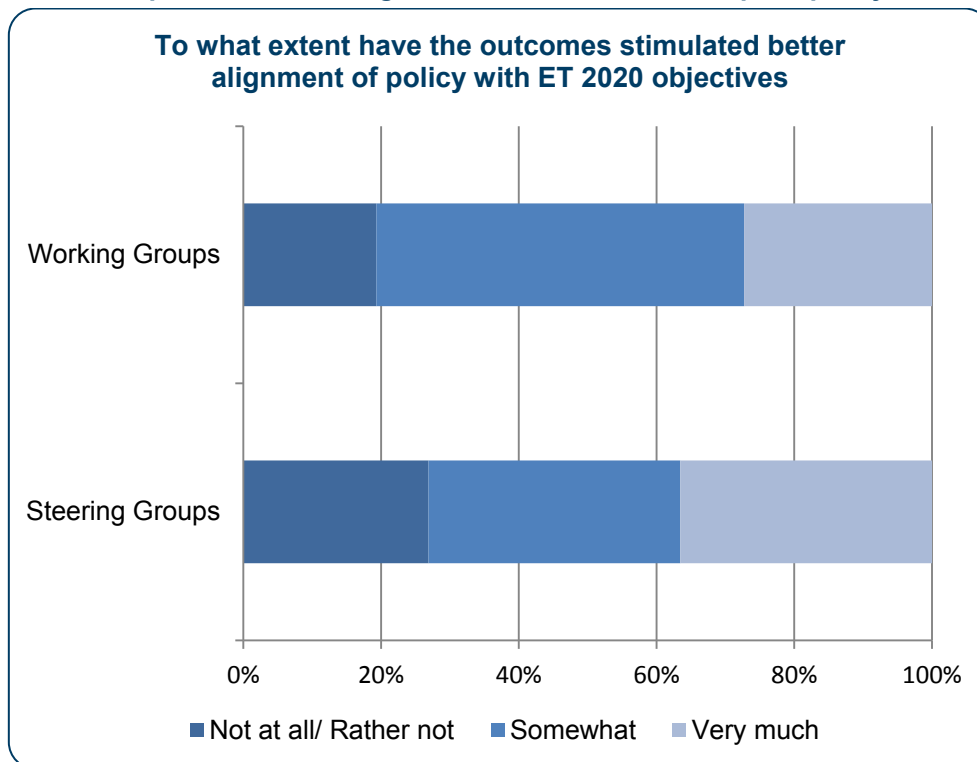
- Strategic emphasis being a catalyst, bringing issues “to the centre of the agenda”;
- Providing extra protection from cuts to social and educational programmes for measures to promote success in school and reduce ESL;
- Shared good practice acting as an inspiration; “It was very useful for our country. The TWG often helped us to gain ideas and to ensure that we choose the right projects. There are also examples of bad practices shared, which prevented us from making the same mistakes. I recall one example on teacher assessment, which went wrong in another member state. We had at that time similar ideas and changed our opinion. You learn from both good and bad practices. And we realized what the weakest parts in our own system.”;
- Long-term timeframe encouraging politicians to think beyond their length of office, and make structural reforms immune to political change, despite challenges for institutions to engage, due to short term funding concerns; “Whereas ET 2020 focuses more on the longer term, we like the Europe 2020 documents because they are much more concrete. They help very much in implementing changes in the short term and we are using the documents a lot. ET 2020 basic indicators are used as the main indicating objectives at the national educational policy guidelines for 2014-2020. Also the national policy documents and plans are planned for the same 7 years period”. (Latvia);
- Seen as offering a clear structure with the ingredients to increase qualifications and social solidarity; and
- Providing external judgement and benchmarking.

A number of participants were critical about the usefulness and added value. The “*WGs serve to produce reports, but they do not represent an effective working tool*” because in most cases they do not go beyond an informative function and many of them have a theoretical approach, while what is needed is very practical tools. The deliverables that are provided are not ‘off-the-shelf’ outputs. Their adaptation is often needed in order to make them usable at national level. Many interviewees stressed the need of more ‘directly usable’ outputs, such as, for instance, a two-page summary of practical recommendations of policy actions. Furthermore, a centralisation and rationalisation of the available tools was stressed as an urgent action to ensure a higher usability and application of both new and existing products.

### Link to wider objectives

With respect to aligning the policies at national level with ET 2020 objectives, almost half (Figure 4.9) of the participants within the Working and Steering Groups state that the outcomes have helped somewhat. 20% of the Working Group and 25% of the Steering Group members state that these outcomes did not stimulate better alignment.

**Figure 4.9 ET 2020 outputs and better alignment of national and European policy**



The mixture of answers given to the e-survey clearly resonated in the interviews at country level. When asked to what extent ET 2020 deliverables feature in national debates on changes in education and training, respondents at the ministries in the 10 member states provided the following insights:

- According to interviewees in Italy, ET 2020 represents a meta-framework in the field of education and training at national level. Concrete examples were mentioned with respect to the main national debates on changes in education and training. ET 2020 has supported the debate related to the comparison between education and training, and helped to give a higher weight and better reputation to technical institutes (professional training);
- In Spain interviewees stated that the ET 2020 benchmarks are well known by the main stakeholders in the education and training fields, and also in the field of employment. They are helping the policy debate, but often as part of the broader debate related to and guided by Europe 2020 in general. The CSRs and the related National Reform Programmes are fundamental for the policy debate in Spain and are the main reference for policy making. ET 2020 is very relevant for helping to achieve consensus between the different actors in the field of LLL, especially because the high level of decentralisation of competences requires persuasion and long debates;
- Interviewees in the UK stress that trying to find a linear linkage of ET 2020 to impact at national level is not sensible. It assumes that a 'label' is stamped onto everything in every process. This is the wrong lens through which to view impact and value. There is a long history of policy reform in the UK which has been informed by ET 2020 and by developments beyond the EU. Indeed, there is always an EU consideration as policies are developed, but they are not 'stamped' as being explicitly linked to a consideration of any other country's policy. Furthermore, there are tangible ET 2020 deliverables, but: (a) they are difficult to identify; (b) they are dispersed across multiple locations on the Web (no single ET 2020 resource page for example); (c) they are inconsistently structured (no consistent style); and (d) high-level synthesis is not carried out (or at least effectively reported) about the value and impact of the deliverables;
- Interviewees from the ministry in Latvia indicate that ET 2020 has been instrumental in developing and implementing many reforms at national level. Teacher continuing professional development, the rationalisation, improvement of the VET schools, and scholarships for doctoral students, would not have been possible without the help of ESF funds which are linked to the National Reform Programme. At a

more practical level, outputs from the Working Groups are shared to a wider group of stakeholders and institutions; and

- The benchmark targets articulated under ET 2020 are generally acknowledged in Germany, although some of them are seen as not specific enough to the context of the German education system. Often, ET 2020 is confused with the larger agenda of Europe 2020 by practitioners. The headline targets concerning education under Europe 2020 have been adapted to the German context. The targets are: 1) To reduce the number of early school leavers to less than 10% of 18-24 year olds; 2) To increase the number of 30-34 year olds with a tertiary degree comparable to ISCED 4, 5 A/B and 6 to 42%. The lack of specificity becomes very apparent when looking at the problems that individual Länder face. Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg have nearly full employment, wherefore bringing education closer to the labour market is not a main priority, while Berlin starts from a very different starting point. The differences in school systems between the Länder, including the requirements to achieve eligibility for higher education, are also reflected in the number of students enrolled in university.

## Dissemination

Dissemination is a key factor in ensuring the success of ET 2020 as it ensures that various outputs (including policy handbooks, guidelines and reports) are shared to a range of audiences who influence the reform of education and training policy and practice at the Member State level. We looked at dissemination at two levels: from DG EAC towards the Member States, and Member States towards their audiences.

The evaluation has noted significant efforts in developing coherence across the OMC activities in particular, but noted also that the understanding of the ET 2020 landscape of actors and activities is not effectively communicated beyond the core players. This situation is not helped by the fact that ET 2020 lacks visibility. This is evident in respect of the DG EAC website where ET 2020 is not headlined on the home page<sup>70</sup>, which currently is 'noisy' with information, and which requires visitors to scroll down to find information. There is not an explicit identification of ET 2020, and it is only when the visitor scrolls down over 'Discover the EU's role' that the term 'Strategic Framework' is seen.

On the 'Strategic Framework' page<sup>71</sup> ET 2020 is then described as a 'forum', and there is a large and varied set of disparate links to other material. ET 2020 does not necessarily need to be identified as a 'brand', with separate logos etc. since as a strategic framework it is helping to define the DG EAC brand. However, if ET 2020 is at the core of DG EAC education and training activities the home page needs to headline it, and a (non-specialist) visitor needs to understand at least: what ET 2020 is about; what it does; who it involves; who it benefits; what outputs are generated (and available coherently on the website); and what are the impacts being achieved at Member State and European levels.

<sup>70</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/index_en.htm) (URLs here checked August 2014)

<sup>71</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm)

At Member State level, as a first stage of assessing dissemination activities for ET 2020, we analysed 28 websites of Ministries of Education. We searched for two elements: a) whether the activities under the OMC were mentioned on the public websites; and, b) whether the benchmarks agreed under ET 2020 were mentioned as part of the statistical data on the education system. The summary of this analysis is shown below.

- The Austrian ministry (BMUKK) has a separate topic on Europa International, which contains a mixture of news on policy developments, opportunities for mobility and European programmes. The Austrian position on Europe 2020 is described in a separate document: “Österreichische Position zur Zukunft des EU-Bildungsprogramms Lebenslanges Lernen ab 2014”. Specifically the relation between Europe 2020 and the reduction of early school leaving is mentioned in a news item. A national strategy for reducing early school leaving is presented, which is a direct result of European agreements;
- The website of Bulgarian Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, mentions the European Higher Education Arena, and the Bologna process in Higher Education. In Vocational education, the Project “The EU-Integration of South Eastern Europe. Implementation of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) in TVET”, is mentioned on the website. The European Commission document ET 2020 is available on the website<sup>72</sup>;
- The website of the Ministry of Education and culture from Cyprus gives a direct link to Eurydice and several EU programmes. It also gives links to annual reports from the Ministry. The annual report describes the various goals under ET 2020;
- The Czech Republic has a separate website that informs about European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) where EU documents can be found on education and training policies<sup>73</sup>;
- Germany launched Nationale Kontaktstellen (NKS), specifically for coordination towards the EU. They are appointed by the governments of the Länder, and mainly responsible for Horizon 2020. On the same website, a brochure of the the Ministry (EU-Bildungspolitik), explains the working of the OMC and the TWG in Education and Training;
- In Malta, the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment publishes ‘Malta’s National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 Strategy’ where there is a chapter on how Malta is progressing in their implementation of ET 2020 benchmarks as well. Also in Ireland and Portugal, extensive references are made to the ET 2020 targets at part of the National Reform programmes; and
- The website of the Ministry of Education in The Netherlands contains an overview of meeting minutes of the Education Council meetings. In the annual report with Key figures on education in The Netherlands, the progress made on the ET 2020 benchmarks is reported quite extensively in a separate chapter (*“Progress EU targets Education and Training 2020”*)<sup>74</sup>.

In almost all instances, the websites of the ministries of education make reference to international developments in education. In many cases the European programme Erasmus+ is mentioned, reflecting the emphasis of many websites on communicating funding opportunities at the EU level. Countries that are in the middle of major reforms in education give more information about the external forces leading to these changes. They tend to refer Europe 2020. Specific information about the working of the OMC, and the involvement of the ministry in the OMC is rare.

<sup>72</sup> [http://www.mon.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/news-home/2011/EC\\_567\\_2011\\_Edu\\_2020.pdf](http://www.mon.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/news-home/2011/EC_567_2011_Edu_2020.pdf)

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.ET2020.cz/>

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2013/09/17/trends-in-beeld-2013.html>



References to the Europe 2020 benchmarks were identified in a number of cases, also as part of publications by the ministries with 'key figures on education'. In many cases, the OECD figures (PISA) are mentioned in those publications, but not (for example France) the ET 2020 benchmarks. Although several countries present annual reports on the Education sector, including comparisons with international benchmarks, they often refer to PISA and OECD figures. The Dutch report specifically addresses progress on ET 2020 and Europe 2020 targets. Also the annual report from Estonia on education, mentions the progress towards the ET 2020 targets and reflects on it.

Although all MS have committed themselves to reaching the ET 2020 targets, and all of them participate in the OMC process, it is clear that the information that is disseminated to the wider audience is uneven. This reflects the nature of the OMC. Many of the deliberations take place between policy makers, and there is no direct ET 2020 labelling of activities. As one representative from a Ministry said, the ultimate results of ET 2020 for the citizens are more important than the process that is used to achieve it. Additionally, in countries where there is increasing euro-scepticism, it may be counterproductive to explicitly label national policy developments as being the result of ET 2020.

Results from the e-survey shows that about 1 in 3 of respondents always disseminated outputs of ET 2020 'back home' compared to less than 1 in 10 that never disseminated them. 92% stated that they shared outputs to policy makers in some way which is a positive finding overall. Interviews at the EU and Member State level provide deeper understanding on this issue. There was a range of routes and methods used to disseminate ET 2020 deliverables. The country level work identified dissemination routes that ranged from department 'briefings' (Spain, France), through to simply forwarding on deliverables to email groups or mailing lists.

Dissemination routes also included more formal interdepartmental meetings and conferences generally organised by the Ministry in charge of education and training. For example, in Finland there were a range of wider conferences and seminars organised by the Ministry which were attended by key policy makers, politicians through to teachers that either formally disseminated (often through a presentation) or informally and passively disseminated (through having various publications for people to pick up and take away) ET 2020 deliverables. Spain has put in place a system of coordination called Education Sectoral Conference (Conferencia Sectorial de Education) which brings together national government and the representatives of the 17 regional governments. These conferences are mainly used to distribute and share the results of ET 2020 and are attended (depending on the subject matter) by 20-50 people on average from across a range of departments and teams linked to the education and training agenda.

Dissemination is at its strongest within Ministries and Government Departments which directly work in the education and training fields. Often that is the case in smaller countries, where civil servants working in the policy arena have close contacts with those working in for example the national agency, responsible for implementing programmes. Although both may have a different perspective and responsibility, the information exchange is easier to arrange. When stakeholders in the country level research were asked 'who' they disseminated deliverables to they tended to state it was other policy makers within their departments who are linked to education and training policy but are not directly involved with ET 2020 activities themselves. There was less evidence of dissemination routes going to wider stakeholders outside of the ministries. Although there are examples of ET 2020 'reaching' and filtering down to stakeholders at the operational and practitioner level, dissemination tended to focus on this higher strategic level.

There were a number of stakeholders interviewed as part of the country level research who were less aware of ET 2020 even though they could be classed as being relatively key in terms of informing policy making and reform in a Member State. Although these stakeholders recognised that they may well have received deliverables that could have originated from ET 2020 activity they did state that social partners need to be more aware of ET 2020 deliverables if it is to have an influence outside of the ET 2020 'family'. Disseminating deliverables 'downwards' to practitioners at the operational level was therefore seen as important in maximising the overall effectiveness of ET 2020:

- In Spain, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, coordinates and monitors the implementation of ET 2020 objectives, promoting the participation of the Autonomous Communities in the process. This is steered by the Education Conference, a body that ensures the coordination of the educational policies in the whole country and which is composed of representatives of the national and regional administrations. However, although ET 2020 coordination is observable at the national level through the Education Sectoral Conference, where the MECD remains in the driving seat, this mechanism is mainly used for reporting and disseminating results related to ET 2020, but it is not a platform directly used for policy-making. This is seen by certain stakeholders as a more formal, accountability approach than a decision making process;
- In Portugal, the ET 2020 strategy and outcomes feature heavily in politicians' discourses, although there is less knowledge of ET 2020 outside policy circles, and educational institutions are very aware of the outcomes that relate to their sector;
- In Latvia the ministerial nominated representatives have to prepare the reports on the results of the meetings of the TWG, which have to be submitted to the Head of the department of the Policy Initiatives. The Reports are discussed at the Ministerial management meetings;
- In France, interviewees notes that ET 2020 as a strategy is hardly known, except by stakeholders directly included in OMC within the Ministry; further differences exist between sectors: ET 2020 is well identified by directions from the former Ministry of Education (DGESCO, DEPP). It is much unknown in directions of other Ministry – former Ministry of Higher Education (DGSIP) and Ministry of Work (DGEFP), including people participating in MOC. ET 2020 is not perceived as separated of Europe2020 - actors refer to as "Strategy 2020"; and
- Relevant actors in Germany are split between federal actors and actors of the Länder. The two main actors are the Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) representing the federal level, and the Conference of Education Ministers of the Länder (KMK) representing the interests of the 16 Bundesländer of Germany. ET 2020 is well understood within the responsible bodies on the federal level (BMBF and KMK). Benchmarking is the central tenet of ET 2020 in Germany. However, in the Länder awareness varies and is often very focused within a small circle of individuals. The general perception is that ET 2020 is far away from the local policy context, and therefore largely lacks relevance. Especially on the local level awareness of ET 2020 is low. This is also due to the generality of the topics addressed under ET 2020. Many of the subjects of the TWGs do not have an immediate connection to execution of education policy on the ground in Germany. Hence, teachers and schools are largely unaware of the existence of ET 2020. Some of the Länder are more aware of the discourse within ET 2020, especially those which hold the rotational mandate by the KMK to represent Germany in the interaction with ET 2020. For example, Bavaria was singled out to be quite actively involved in the European debate, albeit in its opposition to the benchmarks under ET 2020.

In terms of the key challenges to overcome on ensuring the effective dissemination of deliverables a number of issues emerged:

- The ET 2020 dissemination process is organised differently across Member States. In the past, not all participants in the Thematic Working Groups were well connected to the national policy level, thus limiting the chances of proper dissemination. Although the Commission has stressed the importance of sending delegates with mandates, there are contextual factors in the Member States that hinder dissemination of outcomes as well, such as long communication lines within ministries or between ministries, and the responsible bodies (particularly in decentralised education systems);
- The ET 2020 governance model works with one contact point per Member State, which can cause issues of representation in devolved or federal systems. Often a national contact point may have no power in the Regions where Regions are the competent authority, especially in the context of school education and VET;
- The language is an issue for some Member States. Most of documents are only in English (in particular key guidelines or strategy papers) and it is less and less possible to speak another language during conferences. It prevents the appropriation of key papers: this is related to documents perception (“coming from outside”) rather than English skills. Also there is a growing risk to select experts on their English skills rather than on their level of expertise. Documents published in English are in some Member States not diffused: i.e. in some countries the Monitor is not disseminated, because it is only available in English;
- With regard to the ET 2020 Monitor report it was mentioned that data are not directly available. There are graphs that use data not available directly from Eurostat, and that do not provide Excel tables to accede to it. This is seen by statisticians as a major caveat compared to OECD reports, and reduces transparency;
- In relation to the complex governance models in countries, there is a concern about timing and timelines. The rapid pace of the European Semester may lead to accelerated policy expectations, and potentially lower quality outputs due to the lack of time to adequately develop interactions between the competent bodies, national governments and the European institutions;
- Stakeholders at MS level felt it was important to ensure that ET 2020 outputs/ instruments filter down and are disseminated to organisations as well as just individuals;
- Stakeholders noted that for ET 2020 to be a true ‘driver’ of reform it would need to influence ‘many thousands’ of stakeholders across Europe who are involved in the development of education and training policy at Member State level. Even within one Member State, there are many individuals (in national government, local government, in representative organisations, sector organisations, curriculum and standards authorities, politicians, trades unions, lobby organisations as well as education and training institutions themselves) who all have a key role in helping to shape reform in education and training policy. Stakeholders often stated that ET 2020 could struggle to influence all of these key players in all MS even with stronger dissemination and communication activities in place;
- Stakeholders taking part in the country level research highlighted the importance of ‘applying’ the learning coming from deliverables that have been disseminated through ET 2020. There was sometimes an assumption that because deliverables were disseminated then that meant they were being used and applied. It was sometimes unknown by stakeholders as to the extent to which the deliverables were having an ‘impact’ on the ground because stakeholders were unaware of the extent to which they were actually being acted upon;
- There were concerns over a lack of connectivity between stakeholders, and especially between different sectors of education and training and between education and employment. At the MS level a distribution of competences, administrative fragmentation, and a strong hierarchical and bureaucratic structure can restrict the distribution and use of the outputs of ET 2020; and
- As emphasised earlier, there has not been a single integrated website on the Europa server that brings together the main ET 2020 documents and key outputs.

## 4.8 Monitoring mechanism for refocusing and reorienting the ET 2020 framework

The ET 2020 monitoring mechanisms<sup>75</sup> involve an evidence base focused on the seven specific ET 2020 benchmark targets<sup>76</sup>, with a yearly analysis in the “*Education and Training Monitor*” providing the key basis for assessing progress. In addition, core indicators are provided for other ET priority areas such as languages, adult skills, teachers, investment in education and training, ICT in education, entrepreneurship in education and VET. The Education and Training Monitor includes both a comparative analysis as well as country specific analysis.

Supplementing the statistical evidence base are studies and analysis provided by European Commission structures such as Eurydice, CRELL and CEDEFOP, and from other international bodies such as the OECD and IEA. This section explores whether these mechanism are effective in refocusing and reorienting the ET 2020 framework.

### 4.8.1 The Education and Training Monitor

The Education and Training Monitor<sup>77</sup> is a recent innovation (first produced in 2012, having been preceded by ‘Progress Reports’), providing an annual overview of the state of education and training across the MS. It has an important role in identifying progress at the MS level against the ET 2020 benchmark targets<sup>78</sup> by publishing harmonised indicators (including an online visualisation dashboard<sup>79</sup>) for each MS, and providing a country-by-country overview in country fiches. The Monitor also provides overviews of relevant policy developments, research and studies. The core themes in the October 2013 publication were: investing in skills and qualifications; tackling early school leaving and increasing the quality of education; emphasising effectiveness; quality in the modernisation of higher education; facilitating the transition from education to work through vocational education and training; and, upgrading skills through lifelong learning.

A specific example of policy impact at the MS level was provided during the interviews, and relates to the 2013 ‘Education and Training Monitor’ and policy developments in Spain. A specific monitoring group in Spain has been created. The monitoring of ET 2020 also takes place through the RediE platform (Eurydice España), where reports on ET 2020 (EU and Spain), Horizon 2020 and Europe 2020 are made available related to education. ET 2020 indicators defined at EU level are also taken up by other national-level stakeholders. For example, the State School Board, in its “*2013 report on the state of the education system, course 2011-2012*”, reviewed the Spanish education system on the basis of the ET 2020 targets and indicators.

Interviews emphasised that an annual Monitor ‘snapshot’ across the EU-28 has been a significant improvement on the previous three-year reporting cycle, especially since the CSRs are reviewed on an annual basis. The 2013 Monitor, with its information on trends and benchmarks, was used in the Staff Working Documents that contributed to the development of the 2013 CSRs. It was also regarded as beneficial that the monitoring mechanism is more strongly aligned to the Europe 2020 timeline. There were some concerns that the seven benchmarks that were being monitored were too abstract, or not the most important ones.

<sup>75</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/indicators-benchmarks\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/indicators-benchmarks_en.htm)

<sup>76</sup> By 2020: At least 95% of children (from 4 to compulsory school age) should participate in early childhood education; Fewer than 15% of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science; Fewer than 10% of young people should drop out of education and training; At least 40% of people aged 30-34 should have completed some form of higher education; At least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning; At least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18-34 year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad; The share of employed graduates (20-34 year-olds having successfully completed upper secondary or tertiary education) having left education 1-3 years ago should be at least 82%.

<sup>77</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/et-monitor\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/et-monitor_en.htm)

<sup>78</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm)

<sup>79</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/dashboard/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/dashboard/index_en.htm) - The dashboard provides country-level insights into the progress against the indicators, but it does not provide sub-country information where the education systems are functioning at federal levels.

However, such concerns need to be set against the fact that two of the seven ET 2020 benchmarks are formalised as a Europe 2020 headline target<sup>80</sup>, so there is strong political commitment, and, the CSRs are mechanisms by which Member States focus the broader benchmarks down onto specific country needs.

Additionally, although interviewees noted that the Monitor does not have a formal status in the decision-making at the Council level, its utility value is still clearly appreciated as being an important improvement on previous outputs. They acknowledge that it is an organically developing product that was initiated before the Europe 2020 Strategy was adopted, and which needed to be adapted to contribute to both ET 2020 and Europe 2020. Previous ET 2020 progress reports largely communicated tables and figures in a more factual approach. The current Monitor is more analytical, and uses as complete an evidence base as possible, involving both qualitative (drawing on studies and research) and quantitative information. The Monitor has two consultation phases with the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB).

While the interviewees overall acknowledge the evidence and analysis that the Monitor has helped deliver to ET 2020, there were also observations about challenges, and opportunities to improve the process:

- It was not clearly understood by many interviewees what was the process by which elements of ET 2020 such as the Monitor, the Joint Report, the Eurydice outputs, and the Dashboard, were involved in a feedback process. Interviewees could see a chain of activity up to the Joint Report (for example, the 2013 Education Monitor, with its information on trends and benchmarks, was used in the Staff Working Documents that contributed to the CSR process), but the feedback process from the Joint Report back into the OMC processes was not clear;
- The Monitor is not subject of an annual debate with the Culture and Education Committee in the European Parliament nor the Education Council. The political impetus is therefore limited. Whether this can be increased by for example producing several versions (i.e. a technical report and a policy brief), or producing shorter and more frequent policy briefs on the basis of the same data, is not clear;
- While the Eurydice evidence base builds a resource of European information (nearly 40 education systems covered) for some MS there are also other high-quality information resources, particularly from OECD, thus decreasing the added value of another report;
- Some interviewees argued that the quantitative benchmarks need to be associated with action points when a MS achieves a benchmark target. However, such linkage can occur in the context of CSRs, where, for example, a MS can drop a particular recommendation to focus on a new one; and
- It is important that the benchmarks do not become a means of 'naming and shaming' MS. However, the fact that CSRs are to be an important focus of the new ET 2020 Working Groups in terms of their peer learning and other activities on CSRs provides a mechanism to support those MS with particular education and training challenges.

Overall the e-survey and the interviews note a significant improvement in monitoring and enhancement through the development and utilisation of the Monitor. Some of the concerns expressed relate less to substantive problems, and more to do with an understanding of how ET 2020 operates (such as understanding how the CSRs can focus on both overcoming problems and stretching excellence). Many of the respondents clearly understand what ET 2020 monitoring process is 'about', particularly in the context of the Monitor, but less about what ET 2020 'does' and how its many components are linked into a monitoring process that people can visualise and understand.

<sup>80</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index_en.htm)



## 4.8.2 Studies and analysis to support ET 2020 with evidence

A host of especially commissioned studies provide the ET 2020 with evidence-based research as a foundation for policy development.

The library of DG EAC over the period of 2011-2014 includes 55 studies, 31 reports, 52 statistical publications, 9 e-books and 6 policy documents<sup>81</sup>. Table 4-4 gives examples of studies conducted for each sector, as well as some transversal studies.

**Table 4.4 Examples of reports from DG EAC**

Sector	Examples
<b>Adult Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financing the Adult Learning Sector &amp; Quality in the Adult Learning Sector</li> <li>• Prison education and training in Europe – current state-of-play and challenges</li> <li>• Developing the Adult Learning Sector - Country reports</li> <li>• Feasibility of an Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe</li> <li>• Analysis of the Grundtvig assistantships and visits and exchanges actions</li> <li>• Learning for active ageing and intergenerational learning</li> <li>• Grundtvig study - In-service training</li> <li>• Impact of ongoing reforms in education and training on the adult learning sector</li> <li>• Analysis of the Grundtvig assistantships and visits and exchanges actions</li> </ul>
<b>Higher Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measuring the Impact of University Business Cooperation</li> <li>• Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Access, Retention and Employability – Eurodyce report</li> <li>• Study on Innovation in Higher Education</li> <li>• Towards a mobility scoreboard; conditions for learning abroad in Europe</li> <li>• On the way to ERASMUS+ - A Statistical Overview of the ERASMUS Programme in 2011-12</li> <li>• Delivering Education across Borders in the European Union</li> <li>• The Employability of Higher Education Graduates: The Employers' Perspective</li> <li>• Progress in higher education reform across Europe - Governance reform</li> <li>• Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems</li> <li>• Study on the use of credit systems in higher education cooperation between the EU and the US</li> <li>• Feasibility study on student lending</li> <li>• Study on Support to Indicators on Entrepreneurship Education</li> <li>• Design and Testing the Feasibility of a Multidimensional Global University Ranking</li> </ul>
<b>School Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care</li> <li>• Preventing Early School Leaving in Europe – Lessons Learned from Second Chance Education</li> <li>• Study on Policy Measures to improve the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in Europe</li> <li>• Physical Education and Sport at School in Europe</li> <li>• Study on educational support for newly arrived migrant children</li> <li>• Alliances for Inclusion : cross-sector policy synergies and inter-professional collaboration in and around schools</li> <li>• Regional partnerships in school education</li> <li>• Comenius Good Practice Examples</li> <li>• Study of the feasibility of a long-term school education staff mobility action</li> <li>• Study of the impact of eTwinning on participating pupils, teachers and schools</li> </ul>

<sup>81</sup> Based on count 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2014.

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/index\\_en.htm#\\_doctype=study#\\_years=any#\\_themes=any](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/index_en.htm#_doctype=study#_years=any#_themes=any)



Sector	Examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Europe at school</li> <li>• Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe 2012/13 – Euridyce report</li> <li>• The cost of early school leaving in Europe – Report by EENE (link to EENEE website on the EAC website)</li> </ul>
<b>VET</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boosting skills across Europe - The Leonardo da Vinci Programme</li> <li>• Joint EU-Australia study on the role of qualifications frameworks in supporting mobility of workers and learners</li> <li>• Study on a possible framework to facilitate transnational mobility for placements at enterprises</li> <li>• Guidebook on Apprenticeships</li> </ul>
<b>Transversal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and disability / special needs</li> <li>• Analysis of projects funded under the LLP addressing issues related to 'Roma' and 'social inclusion'</li> <li>• Education and Training in Europe 2020 - Responses from the EU Member States</li> <li>• Study on Mobility Developments in School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education and Youth Exchanges</li> </ul>

ET 2020 monitoring is further underpinned by studies and analyses provided by EU structures:

- CRELL<sup>82</sup>, the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning, focuses on scientific research in education and training that contribute to the development of robust monitoring instruments for ET 2020. Its outputs have included methods to forecast<sup>83</sup> the outcomes of the ET 2020 benchmark targets, and a systematic understanding of the levels of public financing of education and quality assurance<sup>84</sup>. Dissemination activities include symposia, such as the one on Benchmarks and Indicators<sup>85</sup> in February 2014. CRELL provides specific expertise to ET 2020, for example in secondary data analysis (importantly in combining data from different sources such as Eurostat and OECD), and analysing microdata. CRELL has participated in developing the application of the 'Joint Assessment Framework' for ET 2020<sup>86</sup>; a method underlying quantitative and qualitative aspects of DG EAC benchmarking, and they also produce projections;
- Eurydice is a network which 'provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies. As from 2014 it consists of 40 national units based in 36 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme'<sup>87</sup>. The network is coordinated by EACEA,<sup>88</sup> but the substantive data collections are undertaken by country-level Eurydice Units<sup>89</sup>. A particularly relevant output for ET 2020 was the 2013 "Education and Training in Europe 2020. Responses from the EU Member States"<sup>90</sup>. The report is based on information at MS level collected through the network, and provides a consistent overview of education and training reforms to contribute to the evidence base for the revision of CSRs as part of the European Semester. An important product is Eurypedia. Topic 14 aims to provide a thematic and chronological overview of on-going national reforms and policy developments since 2012; and

<sup>82</sup> <https://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

<sup>83</sup> <https://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/?q=publications/forecasting-europe-2020-headline-target-education-and-training-panel-data-approach>

<sup>84</sup> <https://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/?q=publications/public-financing-education-eu-countries-cross-country-systematic-analysis-different>

<sup>85</sup> <https://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/?q=events/crell-symposium>

<sup>86</sup> JAF was developed by DG EMPL and EMCO.

<sup>87</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php)

<sup>88</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/contacts\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/contacts_en.php)

<sup>89</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/contacts\\_national\\_units\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/contacts_national_units_en.php)

<sup>90</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/163EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/163EN.pdf)

- Contributing to the ET 2020 monitoring activities, specifically in the area of vocational training and adult learning, is CEDEFOP<sup>91</sup> (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training). CEDEFOP is an EU Agency. Its activities include the commissioning of research, producing publications<sup>92</sup>, and producing statistics and indicators<sup>93</sup>. CEDEFOP is important for VET and evidence based policy making. ETF (European Training Foundation) has a similar role (also as EU Agency) regarding the neighbourhood and candidate countries. CEDEFOP is focused on intra-EU cooperation, and ETF cooperates with neighbourhood countries beyond the EU.<sup>94</sup>

The ET 2020 monitoring process therefore involved an extensive portfolio of evidence. It includes statistics and information that are part of the normal processes such as the provision of official statistics by MS to Eurostat<sup>95</sup>. Eurostat has its own mechanisms to link to the relevant information providers in MS; the European Statistical System. In addition to the formal process of building European official statistics there can be routine mechanisms to provide information (for example to national units of the Eurydice network), and then there can be more ad hoc requests for information, for example from OMC bodies (such as ET 2020 Working Groups).

The value of the networks and agencies (CRELL, Eurydice, CEDEFOP etc.) was widely valued by interviewees. It was acknowledged that they are fit-for-purpose, and that individually they contribute effectively in their specialist areas. Their products have clear utility in the development of the Monitor and the Joint Report, and they add analytical depth to the ET 2020 process. However, while the fact that they do add value is widely accepted, it was not widely understood how they add value. The wide range of activities and products are clearly listed on each of their websites, and their products are clearly badged with their own corporate identity. But there has not to date been a definitive ET 2020 website<sup>96</sup> which shows how the activities and the products are linked in a logical process, for example that flows up towards the Joint Report of the Council and the Commission. It was clear during the evaluation that the internal stakeholders of DG EAC have a very clear logical workflow across the OMC groups, and at all levels of ET 2020. There is real value to be gained in making this available visually to show the extent of integration across ET 2020.

#### 4.8.3 Information collected from Member States

Across the education and training landscape of the EU28, with the very different education and statistical systems (ranging from centralised to federal), the challenge to build the ET 2020 evidence base efficiently and coherently depends on how well-designed and compact the data collection process is (for example, how well the Commission structures requests for data, avoiding duplication or extra administrative burden), and how effective the MS systems respond to the requests from the Commission (for example whether requests are sent to specific sections of a MS Ministry, or whether the Ministry has a centralised bureau to provide European-level statistics information or an international secretariat). Once the evidence base is constructed the next challenge is to ensure that the information is consistent and harmonised, analysed, and the results focused into ET 2020 policy-relevant outcomes, contributing for example to the Joint Report of the Council and Commission<sup>97</sup> reviewing ET 2020. Finally, the outcomes of the ET 2020 process then need to contribute to the policy developments back at the MS level, for example where they help MS in the construction of the CSRs, and in their national-level education and training policy developments.

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Index.aspx>

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications.aspx>

<sup>93</sup> <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/statistics-and-indicators.aspx>

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.etf.europa.eu/>

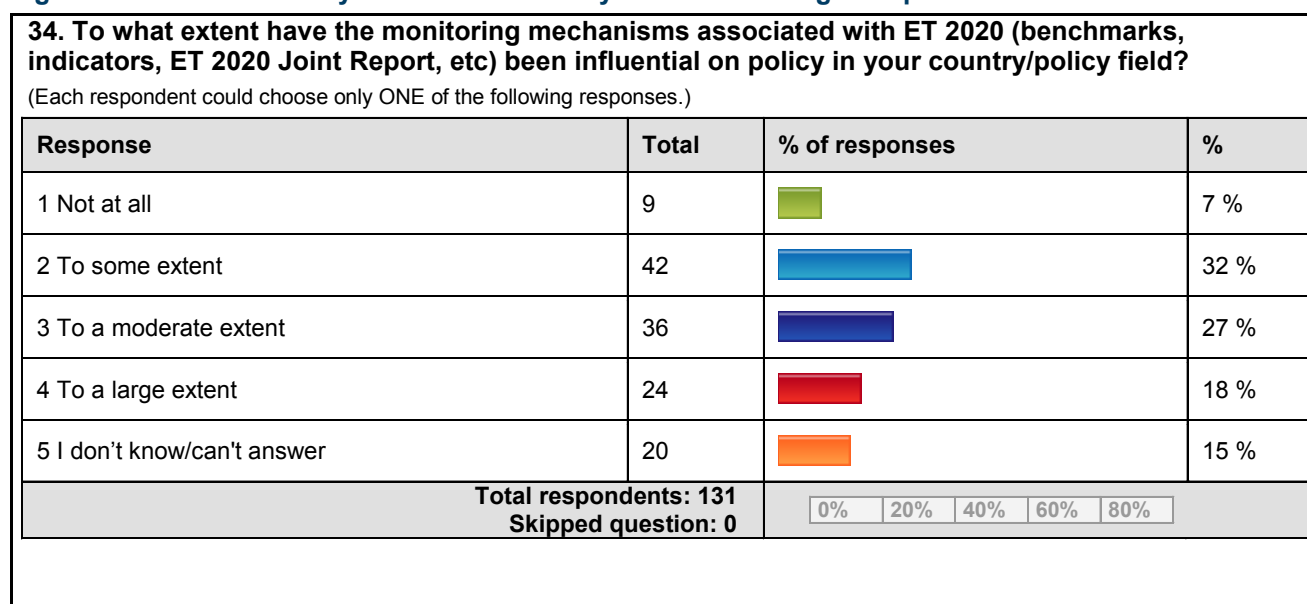
<sup>95</sup> <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/introduction>

<sup>96</sup> Although we do note the increasing clarity of the new DG EAC website and the specific sections relating to ET 2020 [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm)

<sup>97</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:070:0009:0018:EN:PDF>

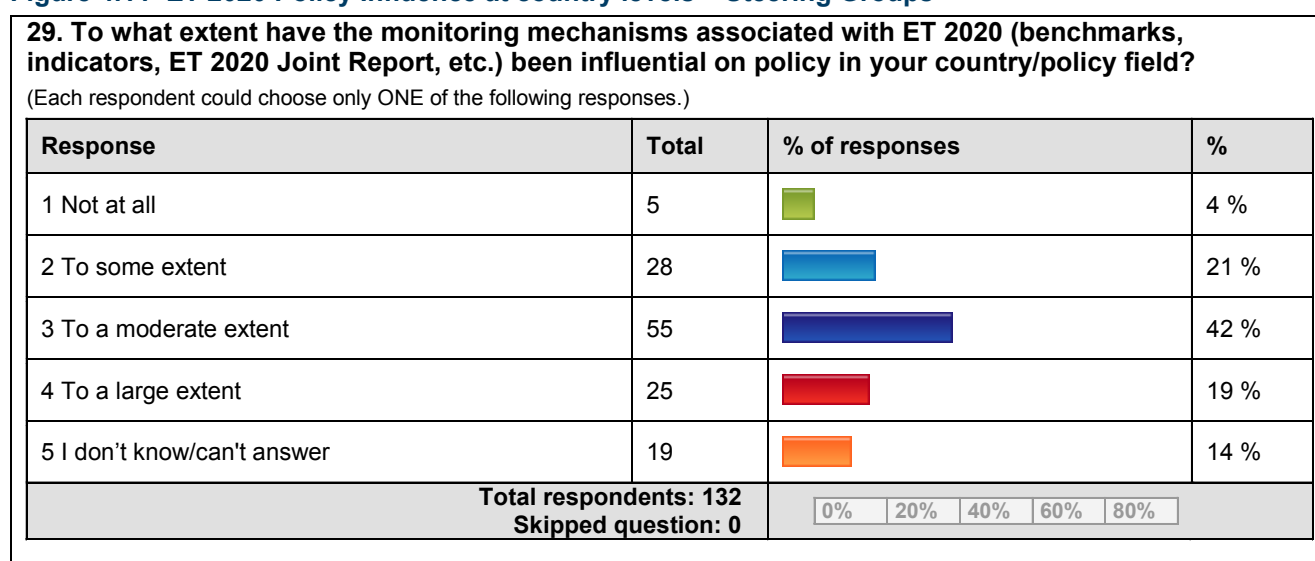
Across the broad range of the monitoring mechanisms ET 2020 stakeholders provided their views in the online e-survey. The responses were segmented into two levels: those nearer to the policy decision-making levels (Steering Groups); and, those who were involved at the Working Group level in the OMC process. Of the Working Group respondents (Fig. 4.10) 77% noted that ET 2020 monitoring mechanisms had an influence on policy developments in their own country, with 45% saying the influence was moderate to large.

**Figure 4.10 ET 2020 Policy Influence at country levels – Working Groups**



For Steering Group (Fig 4.11) respondents the figures were 82% and 61% respectively:

**Figure 4.11 ET 2020 Policy Influence at country levels – Steering Groups**



The higher positive response from Steering Group members may be indicative of the stronger policy level involvement of members across the OMC groups. At the Steering Group level the participants will be at a higher decision-making level than those at the Working Group level<sup>98</sup> and therefore might be more aware of the role monitoring mechanisms play and/or that they operate at a rather different level of policy where the influence of monitoring is stronger compared to WG members. For example, benchmarks on early school leaving can act as a strong general stimulus to develop policy in this area, but may have less influence at the more detailed level of policy discussion within the WGs. It is also informative that amongst WG members who thought that the operational nature of ET 2020 should be enhanced (over half), more monitoring of activities and outcomes was mentioned by several respondents as a means of doing so. Nevertheless, the 77% positive level of response for Working Group members shows also a strong awareness of the potential for ET 2020 to contribute back to the national level policy developments.

The issue of administrative burden featured strongly in the interviews. Within the Commission interviewees were very aware that, while regular data provision (for indicators etc.) is agreed with MS, there is a risk of imposing burden on MS through ad-hoc requests for data and information, and that there is a risk of duplicating requests across the multi-actor OMC landscape of ET 2020. From the MS side there were responses to administrative burden which ranged from irritation at receiving ad-hoc requests from the Eurydice network, to the need for a more strategic approach by MS to the European data needs, as in Germany where a single statistical office deals with all requests from the Commission. In other MS, such as France and the UK, a unit in the education ministry deals with some requests but, other statistical data provision, such as for school leaving are dealt with by the official statistical authority in the context of the Labour Force Survey. In some cases Member States have set up their own monitoring systems for school leaving (i.e. The Netherlands) thus creating two versions of the benchmark. Therefore, the reduction of administrative burden is something that can be addressed by all stakeholders.

It is therefore too simplistic to note just an issue of 'reporting fatigue', although this was regularly cited by MS interviewees. However, strategies to address potential administrative burden need to go beyond simply decisions to, for example, reduce the length of a report that is requested, if the burden of data collection is still the same. Administrative burden can also be addressed at the MS level, as noted above by the coherent approach in Germany where a single statistical office deals with the European data requests. However, while 'routine' data requests will occur along relatively stable schedules, and enable MS to plan data provision, interviewees in MS clearly wanted ad-hoc data requests to focus on policy issues rather than just data, ensuring the requests do not overlap (an issue of more coordination between the networks and structures for example).

In that context the stakeholders observed that Commission could better communicate to the MS that data requests are necessary, and are fit-for-purpose (that there is clear European value in the requests, and that the outputs will have relevance to the MS), that the data are not already available through other sources, or have not already been requested by another ET 2020 'player'. For example, in the specific context of outputs, there is currently no single 'strategic' Web resource on the DG EAC website which brings together the outputs from the ET 2020 actors (OMC groups, studies and reports from Eurydice, CRELL etc.) to show how they are all contributing to the achievement of the ET 2020 Benchmark targets or the refinement of the CSRs.

The overall conclusions from the e-survey and interviews show a broad acknowledgement that the ET 2020 monitoring process has been largely 'effective at refocusing and reorienting the ET 2020 Framework'. It was widely accepted that the structures (CRELL, Eurydice etc.) provide the Commission with focused bodies of expertise that help to build a consistent evidence base across the MS, and to work effectively with other international bodies such as OECD. The ET 2020 monitoring process is now linked more coherently to the MS education and training priorities as focused through the CSRs.

<sup>98</sup> As acknowledged in the guidance issued by DG EAC for the membership criteria of the new ET 2020 Working Groups <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=11228&no=1>

There was concern related to administrative burden relating to ad-hoc requests from OMC groups, although more integration is already 'hard-wired' into the new ET 2020 WGs with the new reporting mechanisms, and a focus on CSRs, and an associated need to utilise the ET 2020 evidence base. However, while there is a clear internal Commission vision about the coherence of ET 2020 processes, that clarity is not effectively communicated beyond the Commission, and as a result many of the participants in the ET 2020 process do not fully understand how what they are doing contributes to the monitoring value-chain that goes up to the production of the Monitor and the Joint Report. Consequently, the broad conclusions from the interviewees and e-survey respondents do not point to substantive requests from interviewees to radically change the monitoring process, but to understand with more clarity the processes in building the monitoring evidence base work better together (integration), and are seen clearly to work together (communication).

## 5.0 EQ 4 Relationship between ET 2020 and Funding Programmes

**EQ 4 To what extent are the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and other EU's funding relevant and coherent, effective and efficient sources of financing for the Member States that are implementing ET 2020 reforms?**

A range of significant European funds have the potential to support Member States in implementing ET 2020 related reforms. This Evaluation Question will enable an assessment to be made of the extent and ways in which this potential is realised.

This section of the report evaluates how the main funding programmes attached to education and training are aligned to ET 2020 strategic objectives, as well as the extent to which funds from sources such as ESF have been influenced by ET 2020 priorities and activities. This is particularly relevant in any evaluation of ET 2020 because the framework does not specifically have any funding allocated directly to it, meaning its influence on EU budgets becomes important when assessing its overall effectiveness.

The following judgment criteria are used to assess the question:

- JC 4.1 The priorities of the ESIF on the one hand, and the Lifelong Learning Programme/Erasmus+, 7th Framework Programme/Horizon 2020 (including the priorities of the calls for proposals) on the other hand, are relevant to and coherent with the ET 2020 strategic objectives and priority areas;
- JC 4.2 EU funding via the Lifelong Learning Programme, the ESF and the 7th Framework Programme has been effective in supporting Member States in implementing ET 2020 reforms that are relevant to the Europe 2020 agenda; and
- JC 4.3 The size of the budget that is spent on supporting Member States is appropriate and proportional to ensure implementation of the targeted ET 2020 reforms.

Please note that, as the Terms of Reference states, '*Given that Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 and the new generation of ESIF will enter into force only in 2014, there will not yet be a basis to evaluate their effectiveness and efficiency*'<sup>99</sup>. A higher level assessment is made of these EU funds coherence to ET 2020 but an assessment of their effectiveness or whether funds have actually been influenced by ET 2020 is based more on the perception of stakeholders rather than an interrogation of spend figures and funding data.

### Summary Answer: EQ4 on relationship between ET 2020 and EU Funding Programmes

The research shows that there is a significant relationship between ET 2020 and EU funding programmes. Not surprisingly, the objectives of ET 2020 on the one hand and the objectives of ESF, LLP and other funding programmes on the other hand are complementary in terms of content and scope and all are mutually reinforcing. However, the actual funding that EU funding programmes have allocated to certain 'calls', projects and other activities are also closely aligned meaning there are various activities supported through EU funds that directly help achieve the goals of ET 2020 linked to the reform of national education and training policy.

The research also picks up on specific examples of how ET 2020 activities have influenced various funding decisions. This includes certain deliverables (e.g. good practice guides) and other activities (e.g. TWG meetings) which have helped steer how funding is allocated within Member States. Although there are a series of issues which drive key funding decisions, various ET 2020 activities do partly influence how budgets are spent in countries.

<sup>99</sup> Page 17 of the ToR.



## 5.1 Relevance and coherence of key funding programmes to ET 2020 and Europe 2020 (JC 4.1)

An initial desk based assessment was undertaken of the relationship and coherence of the priorities of the funding programmes and ET 2020. Assessment of the key EU-level funding programmes relevant to the education and training field (LLP/Erasmus+ along with the ESIF and the 7th FP/Horizon 2020), shows a high degree of coherence and relevance with the overarching strategic objectives and priority areas of ET 2020 and Europe 2020. In terms of the EU structural funds over the last two programming periods, this principally relates to ESF, rather than other funds such as ERDF given the relative focus of each fund. The nature and extent of this coherence and relevance can be illustrated through examining the LLP/Erasmus+ and the ESF programmes in turn.

### 5.1.1 LLP and Erasmus+ and their relevance to ET 2020 and Europe 2020

This sub-section starts with documentary evidence on the degree to which there is relevance and coherence of the strategic objectives of LLP and Erasmus+ programmes and ET 2020 but then goes on to assess whether the actual funding allocated by these programmes has supported Member States in the reform of their systems linked to activities associated with ET 2020 objectives.

#### 5.1.1.1 *Coherence between the objectives of LLP and Erasmus+ and ET 2020*

Documentary analysis indicates a high degree of relevance and coherence between, on the one hand, the focus and objectives of LLP and the successor Erasmus+ programme, and on the other hand ET 2020. In terms of LLP, while the programme objectives were developed prior to the establishment of ET 2020 and Europe 2020, the key themes of the programme and the specific details of the objectives are reflected in the later ET 2020 and Europe 2020 strategic frameworks. The objectives of LLP were to:

- a. Contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning and to promote high performance, innovation and the European dimension in systems and practices;
- b. Support the realisation of a European area of lifelong learning;
- c. Help improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of the opportunities for lifelong learning;
- d. Reinforce their contribution to social cohesion, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, gender equality and personal fulfilment;
- e. Help promote creativity, competitiveness, employability and the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit;
- f. Contribute to increased participation in lifelong learning by people of all ages, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups;
- g. Promote language learning and linguistic diversity;
- h. Support the development of ICT-based resources;
- i. Reinforce their role in creating a sense of European citizenship based on respect for European values, as well as tolerance and respect for other peoples and cultures;
- j. Promote co-operation in quality assurance in all sectors of education and training; and
- k. Improve their quality by encouraging the best use of results, innovative products and processes, as well as the exchange of good practice.

There is a high degree of complementarity between the LLP objectives and the four ET 2020 strategic objectives. Specifically, the LLP objectives a, b, and j reflect the focus of ET 2020 on making lifelong learning and mobility a reality, through LLP funding initiatives around the development of systems and practices, a pan-European area of lifelong learning and promoting co-operation in quality assurance. LLP objectives c and g mirror the ET 2020 focus on improving quality and efficiency in education and training, through funding initiatives relating to enhancing quality and accessibility in respect of lifelong learning. The themes of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship are reflected in LLP funding initiatives to meet its objectives in areas d, f, and i which focus on social cohesion, the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and reinforcing tolerance and citizenship values. Finally, the use of LLP to fund initiatives promoting creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation (objectives e, h and k) closely mirror the ET 2020 strategic objective around these themes.

A similar close relationship between the strategic objectives of ET 2020 and Erasmus+ is evident. Given the timing of Erasmus+' development, it is able to explicitly reference both ET 2020 and Europe 2020 in its general objective which states that the indicative funding of €14.75bn under the programme will contribute in part to:

- The objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, including the headline education target; and,
- The objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), including the corresponding benchmarks.

The relevance of Erasmus+ to ET 2020 and Europe 2020 is also evident at the level of its key actions. For example, Key Action 1 (which receives approximately 63% of the budget) seeks to promote the mobility of individuals in the education and training sphere, hence mapping onto and supporting the first ET 2020 strategic objective. Likewise, Key Action 2 (which is particularly relevant as it is focussed on Member States and receives 28% of the total budget) around innovation and the exchange of good practices, has direct relevance to the objective of ET 2020 concerning improving the quality and efficiency of education and training, along with supporting the ET 2020 objective around enhancing creativity and innovation. The focus of Key Action 3 of Erasmus+ (which receives around 4% of the budget) uses funding to support policy reform, having direct relevance and coherence to all four ET 2020 strategic objectives.

#### **5.1.1.2 Coherence between funding from LLP and Erasmus+ and ET 2020 objectives**

Under the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+; the Commission and EACEA set the annual work programme, including the annual priorities for the selection of projects, and adopt the lists of selected projects. The annual calls that were launched since 2010 have had a similar objective and structure, and each time two parts were distinguished. Part A is dedicated to Support to national implementation and awareness raising of the objectives of European cooperation in education and training whilst Part B has a different theme each year.

Since the annual calls were launched in 2010, 68 projects have been selected (shown in the table below). The amount of funding available is around 3-4 million euros which have supported a wide variety of projects and activities. Through understanding the nature of the rewards provided under the different calls it is possible to understand the extent to which they are coherent with ET 2020 objectives. The table below outlines the nature and size of the different calls for funding.

**Table 5.1 Funding Calls**

Year	Projects awarded	Countries involved	Total Amount
2010	<p><b>Part A - Raising national awareness of lifelong learning strategies and of European cooperation in education and training</b></p> <p>National dialogue on structural sustainability in education and training  Aktionsplan EU-Bildungszusammenarbeit 2011  Promotion of LLStrategies for Vulnerables Groups  Elos-CFEC &amp; national education priorities  For Enhancing Learning Innovation &amp; Sense of Entrepreneurship  IMpulsando el Aprendizaje a lo Largo de la Vida en Euskadi  i-accessibility : Accessible Information for LL  Life learning of pupils and teachers  Promoting ESE and LLL in Estonia  ComForT  Lifelong learning developments and opportunities : integrated promotion at national level  La Formation AGricole : Sa stratégie de lutte contre l'exclusion et la pauvreté et coopération européenne  New Opportunities for Learning: Going LLL  Dissemination and implementation of outcomes of European cooperation in education and training in the field of key competences (especially MST-based), school-business partnership and leadership  Raising Awareness of Lifelong learning strategies  Key actors to empower lifelong learning in Turkey  Learning Links : Lifelong Learning Strategies and Practices in Support of Growth, Inclusion and Well-being</p> <p><b>Part B - Support for transnational cooperation in the development and implementation of national and regional lifelong learning strategies.</b>  Bessere Chancen in Bildung und Beruf durch Beratung  One Step Ahead  International Cooperation for School Leadership</p>	<p><b>Part A</b> Bulgaria, Iceland, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Spain, Denmark, Estonia, Romania, France, Portugal, Czech Republic, Hungary, Turkey, Latvia</p> <p><b>Part B</b> Germany, Italy, Hungary</p>	<p><b>Part A</b>  <i>Total budget cost:</i>  €2,552,049</p> <p><b>Part B</b>  <i>Total budget cost:</i>  €1,186,685</p> <p><b>Total</b>  <i>Total budget cost:</i>  €3,738,734</p> <p><i>Maximum EU grant: between 65% and 75% of total budget cost</i></p>

Year	Projects awarded	Countries involved	Total Amount
2012	<p><b>Part A - Support to national implementation and awareness raising of the objectives of European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)</b></p> <p>100 Youth for Development Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf: Konzepte, Praxis, Herausforderungen A partnership for youth: towards new learning pathways for better employability of young active citizens Raising awareness and opportunities of lifelong learning for low achievers Cross-Sector Solutions for Youth Unemployment Knowledge transfer – from competence Development to Employability Qualification for all Education Policies in 21 Century New technologies, cooperation in education and modelling Local Guidance Networks: Promoting Stakeholder Cooperation for Youth Guidance at Community Level in Latvia Raising performance and competitiveness and matching the demands of the economy and the offers of the labour market through public-private networking</p> <p><b>Part B - Support to implementation of innovative learning environments using ICT (called "Creative Classrooms") in the frame of transnational cooperation in the development and implementation of transversal education and training policy issues linked to the priorities set out in Europe 2020 and ET 2020.</b></p> <p>Creative Classrooms Lab EU Classroom ePortfolios</p>	<p><b>Part A</b> Italy, Germany, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Finland, Latvia, Serbia</p> <p><b>Part B</b> Belgium, Ireland</p>	<p><b>Part A</b> <i>Total Budget cost:</i> €1,614,747 <i>Maximum grant:</i> €1,136,664 <i>% funding:</i> <i>between 48.25 and 75</i></p> <p><b>Part B</b> <i>Total budget cost:</i> €2,120,145 <i>Maximum grant:</i> €1,590,104 <i>% funding:</i> 75</p> <p><b>Total</b> <i>Total budget cost:</i> €3,734,892 <i>Maximum grant:</i> €2,726,768</p>

Year	Projects awarded	Countries involved	Total Amount
2013	<p><b>Part A - Support to national implementation and awareness raising of the objectives of European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).</b></p> <p>Creative Awareness Raising and Empowerment for Employability and Resiliency</p> <p>VET to Work Transition – how to meet labour market needs and engage businesses in Latvia's VET system?</p> <p>Langues et employabilité</p> <p>What's apprenticeship in Emilia-Romagna</p> <p>Awareness-raising on Quality and Institutional Commitment in Early Childhood Education and Teaching</p> <p>Regional Plans for Labour Activity of Youth</p> <p>Towards Employability of Knowledge: Development of NQF in Serbia as a Common Language between Education and Labor</p> <p>Berufsbildung für beruflich Reisende und Artisten, BÜHNE</p> <p><b>Part B - Support to implementation of innovative policy solutions at institutional level to reduce early school leaving, in line with the priorities set out in Europe 2020 and ET 2020</b></p> <p>Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for preventing early school leaving</p> <p>SCHOOL STILL PLAYS</p> <p>Jump@school</p> <p>Team cooperation to fight early school leaving (ESL): training, innovative tools and actions</p>	<p><b>Part A</b></p> <p>Poland, Latvia, France, Italy, Bulgaria, Serbia, Germany</p> <p><b>Part B</b></p> <p>Hungary, Italy, France</p>	<p><b>Part A</b></p> <p><i>Total Budget cost:</i> €1,167,325</p> <p><i>Maximum grant:</i> €875,427</p> <p>% funding: 75</p> <p><b>Part B</b></p> <p><i>Total Budget cost:</i> €3,835,035</p> <p><i>Maximum grant:</i> €2,876,249</p> <p>% funding: 75</p>

In the most recent calls (2013) there is a clear reference with ET 2020 and a requirement for projects to support European policy cooperation in particular. The actual subject and focus of the projects funded under the calls (as detailed in the above table) show that there are a series of activities that are directly or indirectly helping Member States contribute to the four main objectives of ET 2020 (not surprisingly, the strategic objective linked to making LLL a reality is a key aspect of many of these projects). The calls described above also provide opportunities for Member States to test and pilot new ideas which help reform their education and training systems which if deemed successful would be used to support mainstream policy and practice within their country.

### 5.1.2 The ESF and its relevance to ET 2020 and Europe 2020

The European Social Fund (ESF) has been a major funder of lifelong learning across the European Union, with the priority areas of the fund over the last two programming periods linking closely to the strategic objectives of ET 2020. As stated earlier, the design of the ESF and the OPs for this period (up until the end of 2013) predated ET 2020 meaning ET 2020 and the ESF were not directly driven by one another. However, even though the ESF in the 2007-2013 period predates ET 2020 it is useful to understand the coherence between ESF and ET 2020 both at a strategic and funding level.

### 5.1.2.1 Coherence between the objectives of ESF and ET 2020

Table 5.2 illustrates the linkages between the strategic priorities of ET 2020 and those of the ESF in the current and previous programming period through reference to the ESF regulatory frameworks. As with the strategic links between ET 2020 and LLP/ Erasmus+ mentioned above, it shows that there is clear coherence between the two.

**Table 5.2 Strategic linkages between ET 2020 and the ESF regulatory frameworks 2007-2013 and 2014-2020**

ET 2020	ESF 2007-2013	ESF 2014-2020
<b>Strategic objective 1: Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality</b>	<p>(Convergence objective)</p> <p>Art. 3.2.a expanding and improving investment in human capital, in particular by promoting:</p> <p>(i) The implementation of reforms in education and training systems, especially with a view to raising people's responsiveness to the needs of a knowledge-based society and lifelong learning.</p>	<p>Art 3(1)c 'For the thematic objective 'investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning'</p> <p>(c) Investing in education, skills and life-long learning through:</p> <p>(iii) Enhancing access to lifelong learning, upgrading the skills and competences of the workforce and increasing the labour market relevance of education and training systems; including improving the quality of vocational education and training and the establishment and development of work-based learning and apprenticeship schemes such as dual learning systems</p>
<b>Strategic objective 2: Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training</b>	<p>(Convergence and competitiveness and employment objectives)</p> <p>Art.3.d - Enhancing human capital, in particular by promoting:</p> <p>(i) The design and introduction of reforms in education and training systems in order to develop employability, the improvement of the labour market relevance of initial and vocational education and training and the continual updating of the skills of training personnel with a view to innovation and a knowledge-based Economy.</p> <p>(Convergence objective)</p> <p>Art. 3.2.a - Expanding and improving investment in human capital, in particular by promoting:</p> <p>(ii) Increased participation in education and training throughout the life-cycle, including through actions aiming to achieve a reduction in early school leaving and in gender-based segregation of subjects and increased access to and quality of initial, vocational and tertiary education and training.</p>	<p>Art 2(1) 'encourage a high level of education and training for all'.</p> <p>Art 3(1)c 'For the thematic objective 'investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning'.</p> <p>(a) Preventing and reducing early-school leaving; promoting equal access to good-quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education</p> <p>d) Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.</p>
<b>Strategic objective 3: Promoting equity, social cohesion and active</b>	<p>(Convergence and Regional competitiveness and employment objectives)</p> <p>Art. 3 – 1.b.iv Specific action to increase the participation of migrants in</p>	<p>Art 2(1) 'support the transition between education and employment for young people, combat poverty, enhance social inclusion, and promote gender equality, non-discrimination and equal opportunities'.</p>



ET 2020	ESF 2007-2013	ESF 2014-2020
<b>citizenship</b>	employment and thereby strengthen their social integration and to facilitate geographic and occupational mobility of workers and integration of cross-border labour markets, including through guidance, language training and validation of competences and acquired skills	<p>(c) For the thematic objective 'investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning'.</p> <p>(i) Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training.</p> <p>(iii) Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences.</p>
<b>Strategic objective 4: Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training</b>	<p>(Convergence and Regional competitiveness and employment objectives)</p> <p>(a) increasing adaptability of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs with a view to improving the anticipation and positive management of economic change, in particular by promoting:</p> <p>Art. 3 – 1.a.i - Lifelong learning and increased investment in human resources by enterprises, especially SMEs, and workers, through the development and implementation of systems and strategies, including apprenticeships, which ensure improved access to training by, in particular, low-skilled and older workers, the development of qualifications and competences, the dissemination of information and communication technologies, e-learning, eco-friendly technologies and management skills, and the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation and business start-ups.</p> <p>(Convergence objective)</p> <p>(a) Expanding and improving investment in human capital, in particular by promoting:</p> <p>(iii) The development of human potential in research and innovation, notably through post-graduate studies and the training of researchers.</p>	<p>Art.3(2)b 'Enhancing the accessibility of, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies through the development of digital literacy and e-learning, and investment in e-inclusion, e-skills and related entrepreneurial skills'.</p> <p>Art.3(2)d 'Enhancing the competitiveness and long-term sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises, through promoting the adaptability of enterprises, managers and workers, increased investment in human capital, and support for bodies providing practice-oriented vocational education and training'.</p>

Source: Ecorys desk research

### 5.1.2.2 Coherence between funding from ESF and ET 2020 objectives

As noted above, the funding linked to the 2007-2013 period was developed and allocated before ET 2020 was established. In addition, the funding for the present period has not yet been operationalised because the implementation of OPs is yet to begin. However, it is again still useful to understand whether the ESF in the 2007-2013 period has helped Member States to reform their education and training systems and therefore helped countries to realise the overarching objectives of ET 2020.

The ESF financial allocations project database provides a useful picture to understand the extent to which ESF has supported ET 2020 goals around reform<sup>100</sup>. The table below provides the main funding priorities for ESF in the 2007-2013 period which correspond most to the ET 2020 objectives.

**Table 5.3 ESF Funding priorities 2007-2013**

ESF Funding Priority	Total allocation (euros)
Development of LLL systems	9.388 million
Promoting education and training throughout working life	12.350 million
Reforming education and training systems	8.297 million
Development of human potential in the field of research and innovation	4.356 million

Source: ESF Project database

Perhaps the most relevant ESF funding priority that relates to ET 2020 is the one focussed on 'Promoting education and training throughout working life' which received 12.3 million euros between 2007-2013. Compared to the other priorities receiving ESF this priority received a relatively large allocation (approximately 11% of the total allocated). In addition, the other three priorities which best fit ET 2020 (highlighted in the table above) show that a total allocation of 34.3 million euros was spent in Member States on activity that will help ET 2020 to be realised. This shows that around 46% of the total allocation of ESF in the 2007-2013 period is directly helping Member States to reform, improve or change their education and training systems which is in line with the overall objective of ET 2020. It is also worth mentioning that ERDF investments on education related infrastructure projects (code 75) was around 7.3 billion euros which was spent on physical improvements to education and training establishments (such as schools, colleges and universities).

It is also worth noting that the new ESF round for the period 2014-2020 introduced the concept of ex-ante conditionalities to ensure that all institutional and strategic policy arrangements are in place for effective investment before funds are released. These ex-ante conditionalities are designed to ensure that ESF programmes have a more explicit link to ET 2020 priorities and that the various strategic objectives, priorities and underlying principles of ET 2020 are taken on board when designing various ESF programmes. This gave a more 'formal' responsibility to ESF practitioners to take account of EU priorities in Education and Training, including the work and content of ET 2020.

### 5.1.3 7th Framework Programme and Horizon 2020 and their relevance to ET 2020 and Europe 2020

Within the 2007-2013 programming period, the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) sought to combine all research-related EU initiatives together under a common 'roof' with the aim of contributing to the Lisbon strategy goals focusing on growth, competitiveness and employment. As such the development of FP7 preceded ET 2020 and Europe 2020 but does have some key thematic linkages with the latter strategies, as does the successor programme Horizon 2020. In turn a significant proportion of the funding channelled through FP7 and Horizon 2020 will broadly support the strategic objectives of both ET 2020 and Europe 2020.

<sup>100</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/social/esf\\_budgets/results.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/social/esf_budgets/results.cfm)

Of the four FP7 priority areas, for example, funding under the ‘cooperation’ programme directly supported the sort of partnerships between educational institutions reflected in ET 2020’s fourth strategic objective concerning innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. Equally, the ‘Marie Curie Actions’ under the ‘People’ programme directly related to ET 2020 focus on supporting mobility, and through enhancing the quality of education and training as reflected in the first two ET 2020 objectives. Enhancing the quality of education and training through the development of high level research was similarly a focus of the ‘Ideas’ programme under FP7, while the ‘Capacities’ programme with its focus on developing research infrastructure and capacity also supported this objective.

FP7 has been replaced by Horizon 2020 for the programming period 2014-2020. As the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union initiative (the Europe 2020 flagship initiative related to the Smart growth objective), it shares the same strategic objectives and underpinning logic of its predecessor. Horizon 2020 pursues three priorities, namely generating “Excellent Science”, creating “Industrial leadership”, and tackling “Societal challenges”. Among them, the programme section “Excellent Science” includes the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA), the objectives and priorities of which – similar to FP7 – are relevant to and coherent with the ET 2020 Strategic objectives 1, 2 and 4.

Similarly, the focus on developing research infrastructure and supporting innovation within the ‘Excellent Science’ and ‘Industrial Leadership’ elements of Horizon 2020 support the ET 2020 objectives around improving quality and enhancing innovation and creativity. The ‘Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation’ element of Horizon 2020 similarly supports the sort of innovation and partnership development embodied in the fourth strategic objective of ET 2020. [Table 5.4](#) summarises some of the key linkages between FP7 and Horizon 2020 and ET 2020.

**Table 5.4 Strategic linkages between ET 2020 and FP7 / Horizon 2020**

ET 2020	FP7 (2007-2013)	Horizon 2020 (2014-2020)
<b>Strategic objective 1: Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality</b>	Within the “People Programme”, the Marie Curie Actions supported initial and lifelong training, career development and mobility for researchers.	Within the “Excellent science”, the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions supports training, career development and mobility for researchers (and staff of research institutions).
<b>Strategic objective 2: Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training</b>	<p>Within the “People Programme”, the Marie Curie Actions supported initial and lifelong training, career development and mobility for researchers.</p> <p>Enhancing the quality of education and training through the development of high level research through the “Ideas Programme” and research infrastructure / capacity through the “Ideas Programme”.</p>	<p>Within the “Excellent science”, the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions supports training, career development and mobility for researchers (and staff of research institutions).</p> <p>Focus on developing research infrastructure and supporting innovation within the ‘Industrial leadership’ element.</p>
<b>Strategic objective 3: Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship</b>		
<b>Strategic objective 4: Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training</b>	Support for partnership development under the “Cooperation programme”.	<p>Within the “Excellent science”, the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions supports training, career development and mobility for researchers (and staff of research institutions).</p> <p>Focus on developing research infrastructure and supporting innovation within the ‘Industrial leadership’ element ‘Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation’ element supporting innovation and partnership development.</p>

## 5.2 ET 2020's role in influencing funding priorities

Although the previous section explains that the main EU funding programmes attached to education and training are closely linked to ET 2020 goals and that actual funding allocated to priorities linked to ET 2020 has been high, it is important to understand 'how' the European Framework actually affects the way these programmes allocate and distribute funds within Member States to support the realisation of ET 2020 goals.

Before doing this, it is important to note that evidence from the country level work and stakeholder interviews shows how funding priorities at the MS level linked to education and training are influenced by a wide range of different issues and factors, and that ET 2020 is understandably only one of a number of factors that are considered. The degree of influence that ET 2020 has had therefore varies, and external factors such as the economic crisis, and subsequent fiscal and funding constraints at MS level tend to affect the extent to which countries have been able to align their funding streams with ET 2020 objectives.

It is also worth distinguishing early on between the three different funding programmes linked to ET 2020 (Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and the ESF) when understanding the level of influence which ET 2020 has on funding. This is because all three funding programmes have different levels of control at Commission and Member State level depending on the nature of the programme and the objectives of the funding programme. For instance, Erasmus+ has its priorities set centrally by the Commission, Council and European Parliament whilst its implementation is partly centralised but also partly decentralised and up to Member States to roll out as they see fit. Horizon 2020 is entirely centralised where the priorities are agreed by the Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament with no direct control from Member States. Finally, the ESF has a shared management approach with control being left to Member States in terms of the distribution of funds and in relation to the implementation. With this in mind, ET 2020 was often seen by both European and Member State stakeholders as being more influential when it came to influencing funding linked to Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020- which have a more centralised approach.

This centralised approach was seen to make it easier for ET 2020 to influence as it could be linked up 'at source' at the Commission level, rather than relying on all Member States to consider ET 2020 objectives, principles and deliverables when rolling out Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 funded activity in their own country. Thus the link and influence that ET 2020 and Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 was said to have was 'designed in' to the programmes by Commission staff working across the relevant disciplines rather than depending on Member State level to make the clear link. When it came to ET 2020 influencing ESF supported activity (which is a generally decentralised approach) then the level of influence that ET 2020 had was more difficult and more complex as the remainder of this sub-section explains.

Although it is difficult to provide an 'EU wide' assessment of how ET 2020 has directly and indirectly influenced funding priorities overall, there were a number of concrete project level examples emerging from the country level research which highlights how ET 2020 influences funding decisions. Many stated that policy makers at the Ministry level who were involved in various ET 2020 activities (including various meetings and utilising ET 2020 outputs) are often those who also develop OPs, design large national education/ training programmes, and also have a role in the allocation of funding or the setting of various funding priorities. This meant that ET 2020 was indirectly influencing various decision makers, which in turn affected how budgets were allocated and funding priorities developed. For example:

- The TWG on Teacher Professional Development produced a report called 'Supporting Teacher Educators', which was a focus at two key European conferences (Commission peer learning conference 'Education: Policy Support for Teacher Educators'; IE Presidency conference on the 'Professional Identity of Teacher Educators'). These events were attended by those responsible for ESF budgets at the EU, national and local levels as well as national budgets linked to education and training. Stakeholders in Portugal felt that these events and the associated publications made a significant impact on influencing ESF to be allocated more towards teacher educators and evidence from the Annual Implementation Reports suggest that 'teacher support' and 'teacher development' in the relevant OP received allocations of 2.5 million euros which, according to stakeholders was higher than the previous programming period.

Although the decision to allocate ESF funds towards teacher development was also influenced by other factors (including discussions with teaching Unions in the country, research from no ET 2020 related activity within the Member State) the events and outputs mentioned highlighted the importance of this group when it came to developing a robust and successful education system further in the country.

- There were a series of publications developed under various ET 2020 activities (including TWG discussions, events and publications) on the needs of migrant workers and how to increase migrant worker participation in the labour market through improved education and training provision. Stakeholders interviewed at Country level stated that these ET 2020 activities helped raise the profile of migrant workers in the labour force and that this manifested itself in terms of more projects and funding being allocated to this target group. ESF figures for the 2007-2013 period show that 1.170 million euros was allocated to this theme<sup>101</sup>. Although EU wide ESF figures for 2014-2020 are not yet available the AIRs of the ten case study countries show a range of priorities being specifically focussed on migrant workers. In the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Italy, stakeholders taking part in the country level research stated that various outputs and deliverables from ET 2020 had helped 'convince' those involved in developing the latest OPs to allocate more ESF resources to education and training provision for migrants.
- There was a series of good practice guides and portfolios developed across various TWGs that were disseminated to various ESF practitioners at the Member State level, with a plan to increase the amount of ESF that was allocated to a particular issue as well as increase the number of ESF projects tackling a certain problem. For example, in terms of increasing the use of ICT in the classroom, the TWG on ICT and education launched two large scale projects (funded under the 2012 LLL Programme Call) which laid the foundations for the prospective initiatives (policy experimentations) under Erasmus+. The projects Creative Classrooms Lab can be seen as a particular good practice example here as it involved a considerable number of Ministries of Education in Member States, and have an objective to guide upcoming educational strategies and implementation, in turn intending to stimulate similar types of projects on this subject (although there was no evidence to understand whether more projects in this area have been supported at present because of this deliverable). This piece of good practice around the Creative Classrooms Lab initiative was seen to provide very clear advice on how practitioners in Member States (at the school level) could introduce more exciting ICT learning methods that used state of the art technology as well as examples from simple social media 'games' to help pupils learn more effectively through computers.

As stated in the section on the overall effectiveness of ET 2020, a key benefit of various ET 2020 deliverables was around helping inform various funding bids in Member States under the previous programming period. This was particularly true when partners were developing various ESF bids for funding, and who could cite ET 2020 priorities when writing their funding applications. ET 2020 deliverables have also been used to help support funding applications particularly in developing evidence bases, through the provision of statistics and other data to identify the 'need' for funding. As stated earlier, in the UK, Latvia and the Netherlands there were ESF bids written to help target and prioritise ESL (or those at risk of ESL) where ET 2020 inspired research has given these funding bids extra momentum and legitimacy.

ET 2020 has also directly and indirectly influenced funding programmes at a more strategic level. This is particularly true at the EU level where various individuals from DG EMPL (where ESF sits) have been involved in an array of ET 2020 meetings, conferences and research activities. For instance, EAC officials attend the ESF Technical Working Groups and also EAC Desk Officers become involved in OP negotiations as well as input into various ESF guidance papers. Again the influence that ET 2020 has and is having on how ESF is being developed was often more subtle, but the fact that ET 2020 provided more opportunity for joining up DG EAC and DG EMPL at a range of different levels was seen as being key in terms of linking up EU strategy with EU funding associated with education and training.

<sup>101</sup> Priority 'Increasing migrants' participation in employment' from the ESF priority database.



Stakeholders across all Member States taking part in the country level research stated that, rather than ET 2020 increasing the size of budget being spent in Member States to tackle reform, it tended to make programmes and projects work more efficiently and effectively. As stated in the section on the effectiveness of ET 2020, key benefits and 'impacts' of ET 2020 were around making stakeholders more informed, giving them more knowledge and information as well as making them work in different ways. Thus the impact of ET 2020 was often seen as improving the ways things are done rather than directly increasing budgets. Making ESF programmes and projects in particular work more 'smartly or wisely' rather than simply giving them more funding was often highlighted.

It is interesting to note that the country level research showed that ET 2020 was generally only having an influence on funding programmes directly linked to education and training and was not seen to be influencing budget holders and funding from outside of the education and training agenda. Ideally, instead of ET 2020 affecting budgets within education and training it should also be influencing more public funding to be spent on various issues linked to this agenda more widely: to ensure a net increase in funds overall rather than a simple reallocation of funding from one education or training issue to another. The lack of influence was generally thought to be because of the lack of involvement from stakeholders outside of the main themes of education and training, as well as the lack of dissemination of materials to those making wider decisions on the allocation of funding. However, it was recognised that this would be difficult and that this was presently outside of the remit of the OMC process.

There were also issues linked to the implementation structures of ET 2020 which affected the level of influence it had on EU funding programmes. In Finland, Germany and the UK the decision making process around EU funding was often devolved (directly and indirectly) to regions (through Regional OPs). As stakeholders working at this level were less involved in ET 2020 activities, the level of influence that the framework has on where and how ESF is allocated was seen as being less significant. The aforementioned Member States along with Poland and the Netherlands also stated that funding decisions were influenced by actual need in their countries rather than the priorities found in ET 2020.

For instance, in Poland ESL was seen as being less of an issue meaning funding was allocated to other issues with less of a direct link to ET 2020. As would be expected, EU funds were also used to support various national level strategies linked to education and training and it was often the priorities in these strategies that were the main strategic driver in how funds were allocated rather than ET 2020. Any link here between how the funding was spent and the priorities of ET 2020 were often cited as being coincidental: using EU funds to support LLL or disadvantaged groups back into work was linked to national rather than EU level policy despite the latter level having the same priorities.

### 5.2.1 Is the size of budget spent on Member States appropriate to ensure effective reforms are made? (JC 4.3)

This short sub-section assesses whether the budget which is spent on Member States to help them implement ET 2020 reforms is appropriate and proportionate. This question is focussed on understanding whether the size of budget available through the EU programmes mentioned earlier are appropriate to help noticeable reform to take place. This question also recognises that there is no direct funding attached to ET 2020 to specifically help Member States implement, for example, actions resulting from CSRs or to take forward good practice identified through ET 2020 activities meaning EU and national funding programmes are important aspects of success for ET 2020 overall.



It is worth highlighting that the total amount of funding available through EU programmes compared to national education and training budgets is relatively modest and that national budgets are therefore the key driver of reform in any Member State. For example, between 5-40% of the total spend on education and training made by Member States is made up of ESF meaning widespread reform is dependant on national rather than EU budgets and that although individual ESF allocations seem to be large, they are relatively modest when looking at the total figure a country can spend on reform<sup>102</sup>. ESF in some smaller Member States is more important than in larger countries but even in Newer Member States, mainstream funding is the most important when it comes to supporting reform. This means that to truly stimulate large scale reform, EU funding programmes need to influence mainstream funds in some way and that they cannot be expected to drive forward reform by themselves.

Various evaluations including those linked to ESF and LLP all tend to state that EU funding has some form of beneficial impact on helping to influence and improve mainstream provision whether in terms of scale, volume or scope<sup>103, 104</sup>. For the ESF, because the sums of funding are relatively large then the likelihood of them supporting more reform tends to be greater than funding from the LLP for example. Work undertaken evaluating the impact of ESF on lifelong learning shows that the fund has supported Member States (particularly newer Member States) to target support at those most in need (particularly young people, old people and the lower skilled) which in turn has helped mainstream funding to be much more effective. ESF supported provision has also added 'depth' to existing mainstream funding in terms of increasing the volume of beneficiaries supported. Despite the LLP having smaller budgets, previous evaluations have also shown that funding from the LLP has been used for experimental and innovative actions which often lead to improvements in mainstream funding and in turn, a reform in Member States education and training systems. Previous evaluations of LLP have also shown that LLP has tested new policies and helped small scale reform which in turn has been rolled out using ESF and mainstream funds to help make a larger contribution to Member State reforms.

This means that ET 2020's ability to influence EU funding as well as mainstream budgets is critical and the previous section stated a number of examples highlighted by stakeholder which show how various ET 2020 activities have helped decision makers in charge of budgets to change the way they allocate funding (also recognising that other factors influence actual funding decisions).

<sup>102</sup> [ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=701&langId=en&internal\\_pageId=616&moreDocuments=yes&tableName=INTERNAL\\_PAGES](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=701&langId=en&internal_pageId=616&moreDocuments=yes&tableName=INTERNAL_PAGES).

<sup>103</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/evalreports/education/2011/llpreport\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/education/2011/llpreport_en.pdf).

<sup>104</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=701&langId=en&internal\\_pageId=616&moreDocuments=yes&tableName=INTERNAL\\_PAGES](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=701&langId=en&internal_pageId=616&moreDocuments=yes&tableName=INTERNAL_PAGES).

## 6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This section presents the conclusions and recommendations of the interim evaluation of ET 2020. They have been synthesised from across the evaluation questions in order to increase their strength and usefulness. Conclusions are presented with a following summary of the evidence on which the conclusion is based. Recommendations then follow, linked to the relevant conclusions, and are accompanied by a brief explanation.

There are a range of strengths and weaknesses to the evidence base used in the interim evaluation. The main strengths lie in a triangulation of primary and secondary research data, with the former using desk based research to collect and assess various outputs of ET 2020 activities (including minutes, discussion papers/ notes of events, various research reports, tools and other outputs of ET 2020 activities) and the latter collecting the views of over 500 stakeholders involved in ET 2020 at both EU and Member State level. Triangulation of the results would have been enhanced by the use of other secondary 'monitoring' data and evidence collected through the various activities of ET 2020 themselves (e.g. systematically collected attendance records, participant feedback sheets, notes or minutes from each meeting). Although some ET 2020 activities did systematically record their activities (which we use in the evaluation) this was generally not the case across the board.

### Conclusion 1 – Objectives and priority areas

**The objectives and priority areas of ET 2020 are broad and many, and provide a framework within which activities take place, rather than being a consistent and strong driving force for change across education and training systems. On the one hand, ET 2020 fulfils an important need in education and training at European level for an integrated strategic framework that covers all the objectives relevant to the field and encompasses diverse Member State needs and sectoral agendas. On the other hand, the breadth and generality of the objectives and priorities do not clearly meet the requirements of the 2009 Council Conclusions to make European cooperation 'concrete' and to produce 'clear and visible outcomes'. Lessons from early school leaving do, however, demonstrate how ET 2020 can be an effective driving force for change.**

This conclusion is based on the following evidence:

- Lifelong learning has been the key underpinning concept of education and training strategy at EU level since before ET 2020, having been embodied in its predecessor, ET 2010. The need for closer interaction between the sectors of education and training to deliver lifelong learning remains as strong as ever. In the e-survey most respondents indicated that they had greater knowledge of the two strategic objectives related to lifelong learning/mobility and quality and efficiency. Although underlying reasons for these responses are not known, the fact that these objectives are most well-known may reflect a greater importance attached to such topics in respect of European cooperation by ET 2020 participants. (JC 1.2)
- Any framework at the European level in education and training needs to accommodate all the phases and sectors of education and training, and the large variation between Member States in terms of their priorities for modernisation and development. Without such a framework there is a risk that the main delivery channels in education and training, when organised as sectors, will dominate, with a lack of cooperation and a failure to implement lifelong learning (JC 1.2).

- On the question of whether there are too many objectives and if they should be modernised to achieve a closer connection between education and employment, the evidence points to some division of opinion but on balance a preference for change amongst ET 2020 participants: the percentage of ET 2020 participants expressing an opinion in the e-survey in favour of change was 50% for Working Group and 53% for steering group respondents. At the same time, a substantial minority (39% and 36% respectively) stated that no change is needed to the objectives. Qualitative responses showed that some participants would welcome a more concise list of priorities on the basis that this would more effectively drive change around a common agenda, although other participants place most value on having a flexible 'menu' of broad and long term objectives from which Member States can focus on issues that are of most concern to them (JC 1.2).
- Mapping the sectoral agendas against the ET 2020 objectives and priorities shows that ET 2020 is the only framework covering all the needs in the field, thereby providing an "umbrella" function (JC 1.2).
- The priority areas and the three-year cycle for their implementation and review provide a flexible mechanism to take into account evolving and new needs. They have had an important influence on the work carried out under the OMC (JC 1.2). At the same time, sitting within the broad objectives, the priorities do not help to address the problem of lack of focus (JC 1.2).
- The flexibility of the framework means that it has also been possible to interface with the European Semester and Europe 2020 and take into account the urgent priorities they contain (see Conclusion 3) (JC 1.1).
- However, whilst the ET 2020 objectives provide a means of covering (nearly) all possible policies and practice in education and training in Europe, they fail to specify why tackling them specifically at European level brings added value. Applying such a criterion would help to streamline the objectives and priorities (JC 1.1).
- Giving greater priority to objectives/priorities such as lifelong learning and important transversal issues (such as entrepreneurship) would give ET 2020 added value to sectoral agendas by emphasising the interconnectedness needed between the different sectors in education and training (JC 1.1).
- Early school leaving exemplifies how ET 2020 can be successful in bringing about policy development. Factors behind its success include its clarity of focus, a strong political imperative at both European and Member State level and well organised activities and high quality outputs through the open method of coordination (JC 3.6).

### **Recommendation:**

**On this basis it is recommended that:**

**In light of the continuing need for lifelong learning, ET 2020 should remain the integrated overall framework steering European cooperation in education and training but with objectives that are streamlined and more tightly focused via sharpened priority areas. In order to generate new objectives, consideration should be given to: (a) urgent social and economic priorities such as already expressed through Europe 2020 and the European Semester; (b) the added value of European cooperation; and, (c) the added value ET 2020 could bring to sectoral agendas by providing a broader context that can help to ensure synergies and coherence between sectors by emphasising lifelong learning and transversal issues (see also Conclusion 5).**

## Conclusion 2 – The operational dimension

Mechanisms have not been systematically put in place to enable ET 2020 to deliver the ‘clear and visible outcomes’ specified in the 2009 Council Conclusions. The use of benchmarks and indicators is not systematically applied, and those that have been devised do not effectively serve as a tool to monitor direct progress in the achievement of the strategic objectives. To achieve this requires the specification of more detailed intended outcomes (in the sense the term is used in evaluations) linked to each objective, which it is feasible to both monitor and measure without an undue reporting burden. This goes together with developing a more focused set of objectives (Conclusion 1), since if such an approach used the current set it would quickly become unworkable by the level of activity required. The operational nature of ET 2020 thus needs to be enhanced, building on recent developments including the new Working Groups and the Education and Training Monitor. The sectoral dimension also needs to be taken into account (see Conclusion 5).

This conclusion is based upon the following evidence:

- The benchmarks and indicators that have so far been developed for ET 2020 do not provide systematic coverage of all the objectives and priorities (JC 2.4).
- 52% of e-survey respondents noted that the operational nature of ET 2020 should be enhanced compared to 25% saying it should not be. Suggestions included a work programme, action plans, better dissemination, and enhanced monitoring. 42% of steering group and 54% of Working Group e-survey respondents said that ET 2020 needs a concrete work programme (JC 3.2).
- The Education Council has on a number of occasions invited the Commission to go in the direction of a more concrete work plan. In November 2012 which invited the Commission to “*Present to the Council a draft “ET 2020” work programme, with a view to ensuring the implementation of the priority areas for the second “ET 2020” work-cycle 2012-2014 and of the country-specific recommendations, where relevant. The work programme should specify for each priority area the planned action, timing and involvement of OMC working groups*”. Again, in February 2014, the Council asked the Commission to use the mid-term stocktaking “*to help prepare the next draft Joint Report ... which identifies key priority areas and concrete issues for future work*” (JC 3.4).
- The ongoing development of the Education and Training Monitor shows the potential for gathering not just quantitative data but also evidence in relation to the types of measures being put in place by Member States to tackle the challenges they face (JC 3.7).

## Recommendations:

On this basis the following four recommendations are made:

The more tightly focused set of objectives recommended under Conclusion 1 should be linked to concrete and clear intended outcomes which can be systematically monitored.

A work programme should be added to ET 2020 which sets out a coherent package of activities to be undertaken at European level and with milestones and goals for Member States in order to be able to better measure progress.

To accompany the work programme, and to ensure clarity and visibility of outcomes, a monitoring framework should be implemented, drawing on good practice from elsewhere, e.g. the monitoring of PROGRESS, the EU employment and social solidarity programme (2007-2013)<sup>105</sup> and the framework currently being developed for the successor to PROGRESS. Although these are spending programmes, the framework is nonetheless informative since it includes not only a logical framework and indicators but the collection of both qualitative and quantitative information about the outcomes of the programme (reports, conferences, outcome of activities supported, etc.) and their impact, and an annual survey of stakeholders to gather their opinions. It therefore has important lessons for ET 2020 in terms of how to handle qualitative outputs and outcomes. The new ET 2020 Working Groups should be part of this framework, with reporting linked to their common mandates in terms of deliverables and timelines.

The Education and Training Monitor should continue to be developed as a mechanism to monitor the ways in which Member States are seeking to address the issues they face, further improving the analysis of policy measures.

<sup>105</sup> Committee for the Implementation of the Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS – 2007-2013 (2008) Developing and Implementing a Monitoring Framework for PROGRESS 2007-2013.

### Conclusion 3 – ET 2020, Europe 2020 and the European Semester

The relationship between ET 2020 and Europe 2020 and the European Semester has evolved and become closer over time. Europe 2020 and the European Semester provide important political impetus to what happens within the context of ET 2020, by prioritising the most urgent issues linked to acute economic challenges. For its part, processes within the ET 2020 framework support the delivery of the Europe 2020 headline targets and national reforms to increase performance of education systems with intelligence and the development of innovative thinking. The introduction of annual peer reviews through DG meetings have been valuable at providing detailed and expert debate on the implementation of challenges identified in education and training-related CSRs (though with scope to make improvements), and have the potential to strengthen the implementation of the issues identified in such CSRs. At the same time, there is scope to improve political level interactions between the two domains, and to clarify the linkages between ET 2020, Europe 2020 and the European Semester for ET 2020 participants and Member States.

This conclusion is based on the following evidence:

- There is a stronger political impetus at European level in the employment domain because of the different standing of employment policy and of the Employment Committee in the Treaty compared to education and training policy and the Education Committee. The competence of the European Union in education and training also varies along sectoral lines leading to different sectoral agendas which makes governance complex (see Conclusion 5). These differences are long-standing. There has also been a loose relationship between political structures and the informal arrangements related to ET 2020 as described in Conclusion 5 (JC 3.1).
- Such differences may be the reason that, amongst participants involved in ET 2020, Europe 2020 tends to be perceived as a Council vehicle, whilst ET 2020 is perceived more as a European Commission vehicle (JC 3.3).
- Opportunities for political discussion on progress on ET 2020 are limited. The Education and Training Monitor does not have a formal status in the decision-making at the Council level and is not the subject of an annual debate with the Culture and Education Committee in the European Parliament (JC 3.7).
- That Europe 2020 and the European Semester have been important stimuli in education and training is also related to the fact that the economic and employment needs became far more acute and urgent with the crisis than was reflected in many of the objectives of ET 2010 and then ET 2020. Education and training policy was also not quick to respond. Council Recommendations of 2011 and the 2012 Joint Report highlighted the need for increased efforts to tackle school leaving, for example, and, as noted elsewhere, the work of the Working Group on this topic is an example of good practice of how ET 2020 can work effectively to lever change – see Conclusion 1 (JC 4.1).
- Most respondents to the e-survey (50% for Working Group and 53% for steering group respondents) were in favour of modernising the ET 2020 objectives to achieve a closer connection between education and employment, although a substantial minority (39% and 36% respectively) stated that no change is needed to the objectives. (JC 1.2).
- Linkage to the headline targets of Europe 2020 is one of the factors that helps to explain the more rapid and comprehensive steps taken in respect of some education and training priorities compared to others. Early school leaving, one element of the double headline target related to education and training, is widely considered to be an exemplar for the efficient and effective operation of ET 2020 (see Conclusion 1 which outlines the reasons for its success) (JC 3.1).



- The 2012 Joint Report proposed closer co-operation between the Employment Committee and the Education Committee and there have been developments in this respect, such as when Education Committee members attend the Employment Committee discussions of the CSR's. There is scope to continue to increase cooperation further (JC 3.1).
- ET 2020 activities are increasingly contributing knowledge to support Member States in the implementation of education and training-related CSR's. This is evident, for example, in the focus of the Education and Training Monitor, and in the mandates for the new Working Groups (JC 4.3, 4.4).
- The first twoannual ET 2020 peer reviews organised through Director-General meetings, are reported to have generated valuable inputs into deliberations by EMCO and the Council regarding the implementation of education and training-related CSRs (see Conclusion 9). In so doing they help to strengthen the linkages between the two domains (JC 3.4).
- The peer reviews have been subject to discussion and review which has led to modifications to better meet Member State needs but, at the same time, feedback from participants indicates that there are opportunities to improve. For example, feedback from the March 2014 schools policy review highlighted the need for more time for preparation (countries had around one month) and in-depth discussion (there were two rounds of parallel workshops which provided five-and-a-half hours for four Member States in each cluster) (JC 4.1).
- Intelligence and creative thinking produced by ET 2020 are helping Member States in respect of the European Semester. 79% of Working Group respondents to the e-survey said they were somewhat or very positive that ET 2020 mechanisms were supporting them to tackle European Semester issues; and 33% of e-survey respondents said they had been able to make use of ET 2020 outputs in respect of European Semester issues, with a further 33% saying they had been able to make marginal use of them (JC 3.1, 3.2).
- A minority view was encountered during the interviews that education and training policy had been shifted too far in the direction of economic and labour market needs to the detriment of a broader conception of the purpose of education and training. It was also unclear to such respondents where certain policy initiatives had come from, notably Rethinking Education, as these appear not to have originated in or been the product of existing processes. Furthermore, one third of e-survey respondents thought that the link between ET 2020 and Europe 2020 was unclear (JC 3.1, 3.2).

### **Recommendations:**

On this basis four recommendations are made:

- Cooperation should continue to be enhanced between the education side of the Council and the Employment Committee so that there can be a more level "playing field" between the employment and education and training domains.
- The annual ET 2020 peer reviews organised through Director-General meetings should be established as an intrinsic part of the relationship between ET 2020 and the European Semester. They should be scheduled so as to allow enough preparation time for Member States on the one hand and in order to allow timely inputs to EMCO deliberations on the other, e.g. during Spring each year. The peer review meetings also need to be long enough for in-depth discussion: at least one whole day for four countries undergoing review is recommended. These factors may require them to be organised separately from existing DG meetings.
- There is a need for greater clarity regarding the relationship between ET 2020, Europe 2020 and the European Semester for stakeholders. This should be reflected in the current revision of Europe 2020 and also be part of the improved communication and visibility of ET 2020 recommended in Conclusion 6.
- The political impetus behind ET 2020 should be enhanced by integrating the Monitor into a policy Communication from the Commission. This could be the basis for an annual ET 2020 policy debate with the Education Council and the European Parliament.

#### Conclusion 4 – Formal and informal governance

ET 2020 comprises both formal and informal governance elements, both of which are essential to its effectiveness. However, the way in which these elements relate to one another has been loose and not well-understood by some participants or part of the wider community. In addition, the relationships between the informal bodies of senior Member State officials (the High Level Group and the Director-General groupings) and the Working Groups have not been systematic, although the new *modus operandi* introduced in 2014 will help to address this issue. In the absence of the type of political structures that exist in the employment domain, the High Level Group and Director-General groupings have a pivotal role in completing the circuit between political decision-making related to ET 2020, Europe 2020 and the European Semester and the work of Member States in the Open Method of Coordination that should be enhanced.

This conclusion is based on the following evidence:

- There is not a formal relationship between the Education Committee, the High Level Group and the Director General groupings, although sometimes there are informal political discussions in the HLG on topics that will later be the subject of a formal Commission Communication which will be addressed to the Council, i.e. to the Education Committee. In general, however, there is an onus on the European Commission to have a strong coordination role, and this contributes to a perception that ET 2020 is a European Commission led process (JC 3.1).
- The informality of the High Level Group is valued by participants, enabling an openness of discussion. 93% of HLG e-survey respondents said that the informal setting had an effect on realising the benefits from cooperation. The HLG stands in contrast to the Education Committee where Member States are more likely to take up formal positions. Evidence from the e-survey also suggests that HLG participants tend to be satisfied with the work of their group in a number of respects, and more positive than other respondents (JC 3.3).
- The relationship between the High Level Group and the Director General groupings is unclear. The HLG is more transversal than the DG groupings since it covers education and training as a whole and under the new generation of WGs is responsible for transversal topics (a welcome clarification). The HLG gives strategic orientation for the months ahead, and a strategic steer to the Presidency. However, it is not clear to participants whether, if at all, the High Level Group has, or is supposed to have, authority over the Director General groupings (JC 3.1).
- The High Level Group and the Director General groupings are supposed to be attended by senior officials and/or experts in relevant fields, but the sending of substitutes to meetings by Member States is not uncommon. Sometimes, at HLG meeting, Member States are represented through the education attachés from their Permanent Representations, who have less overall policy-steering experience. These factors can have an adverse effect on the level of debate that can take place. (JC 3.1)
- Steps are already being made to improve the interface between the formal and informal elements of ET 2020 governance. In the spring of 2014 the role of the High Level Group and Director General groupings was enhanced to have a key task in determining which outputs, and in which format, from the Working Groups should be presented to the Council via the Education Committee, and also how key policy results should be disseminated. In addition, the annual peer reviews that have already taken place via the DG meeting have fed into the deliberations of EMCO regarding CSR's (Conclusion 3) (JC 4.1).
- Effective feedback loops are also now being developed between the Director-General groupings and their respective Working Groups in relation to CSR's, as part of the new Working Group mandates. The annual Peer Review in the context of the Directors-General groupings have been positively received by participants and the outputs have been useful both as inputs to EMCO deliberations and the topics pursued by Working Groups (JC 3.6, 4.1).

## Recommendations:

On this basis the following two recommendations are made:

- In light of the pivotal role that can be played by the High Level Group between the informal and formal governance of ET 2020 and between ET 2020 and the employment policy domain, its role in terms of general oversight of ET 2020 should be strengthened- building on recent enhancements to its role in respect of Working Group oversight and in determining the results to be presented to the Council via the Education Committee. The High Level Group. It should be responsible for developing and implementing the ET 2020 monitoring framework recommended above, and be given a more general oversight role regarding ET 2020's overall development. This would reduce the onus on the European Commission to have the coordinating function and has the potential to strengthen Member State ownership in ET 2020. For this new role to be effective the HLG membership should comprise Secretary-Generals of Ministries of Education only since they have requisite expertise and authority.
- Member States should improve the way in which they interact with both the formal and informal structures at a senior level. They have already been encouraged to bring together their national representatives from the various Working Groups at least once a year with senior officials and policymakers to ensure they adopt a more co-ordinated approach, and the evaluation supports this new development. Member States also need to ensure that the right people are sent to the right meetings and that minimal use is made of substitutes wherever possible.

## Conclusion 5 – ET 2020 and sectoral agendas

While the range and generality of the ET 2020 objectives has enabled it to be relevant and coherent in respect of sector-based communities and agendas (see Conclusion 1), it has not enabled ET 2020 to be implemented in a consistent and coherent manner. This may be suitable from the perspective of the different sectors which have very different institutional and policy contexts. However, a more systematic and consistent connection between ET 2020 and sectoral agenda-setting and delivery would enable the more effective implementation of ET 2020. This requires action in respect of ET 2020 objectives, reporting mechanisms and OMC processes.

This conclusion is based on the following evidence:

- The framework of ET 2020 objectives and priorities is broad and it is difficult to envisage a situation in which there would not be relevance and coherence with sectoral agendas or where the output of sectoral agendas would not reinforce the overall strategy. The flexibility of the framework means that the different sectors have been able to use the mechanisms available to suit their own needs (JC 3.2).
- There are no formal linkages between ET 2020 and sectoral agendas, although awareness of ET 2020, as evidenced by the e-survey, is high amongst senior officials who attend the Director General meetings (JC 3.1).
- ET 2020 has probably been most useful to those sectors which, for reasons of subsidiarity, do not have well-developed governance arrangements at European level, i.e. the school and adult education sectors. The school sector in particular has been able to use ET 2020 to good effect to enable Member States to take collective action, and learn from one another in a number of areas including early school leaving, early childhood education and care and teacher education. In adult education, it has provided a means of encouraging the development of the sector in many Member States (JC 2.3).
- Mechanisms have not been systematically put in place to enable ET 2020 to deliver the 'clear and visible outcomes' specified in the 2009 Council Conclusions (Conclusion 2).

## Recommendations:

On this basis three recommendations are made:

- The new objectives which it is recommended should be formulated for ET 2020 need to have greater clarity about the added value of ET 2020 in respect of sectoral agendas by emphasising lifelong learning and the need for cross-sector policy development on important transversal issues such as entrepreneurship and innovation in education (see Conclusion 1).
- In order to strengthen the linkages between sectoral agendas and ET 2020, the Directors General groupings should be given a clearer oversight role in respect of regular joint planning and reporting on sectoral progress against the new streamlined ET 2020 objectives recommended above (Conclusion 1). Such arrangements would have the benefit of bringing together under one 'umbrella' the varied reporting arrangements that currently pertain, e.g. through Copenhagen/Bruges, Bologna and specific Council Recommendations, e.g. on early school leaving. These new arrangements would be particularly beneficial for the schools and adult education sectors, helping to introduce more systematic agenda-setting and reporting in relation to ET 2020 objectives and priorities. In respect of the Copenhagen/Bruges process, these new arrangements should also take into account the important role currently played by the ACVT.
- These linkages and reporting arrangements would also help to strengthen the new arrangements for Working Groups, ensuring a more systematic relationship between their work, the role of the Director General groupings and ET 2020 objectives and priorities.

## Conclusion 6 – Transparency and visibility

ET 2020 processes are complicated, involving different bodies with different formal/informal statuses. It is difficult for those not involved in running the system to understand it in its entirety, and hence to understand their role. This lack of transparency deters participation and undermines the effectiveness of processes and outputs. ET 2020 also lacks adequate levels of visibility in the context of the 2011 Council Conclusions which invited the Commission to 'strengthen the visibility and transparency of measures taken in the context of the OMC by ensuring effective operational coordination': outside of those directly involved, awareness tails off dramatically.

This conclusion is based on the following evidence:

- Although most e-survey respondents indicated they had a good awareness of ET 2020, only 49% of Working Group members self-assessed their awareness as high and 16% assessed their awareness as low. Many interviewees commented on the complexity of the processes and that it was difficult for participants to understand the contribution they might be making (JC 3.2, 3.3).
- Member States signalled that it could be difficult for them to know what work was being done in which group within ET 2020, and this made it difficult for them to coordinate their contributions (JC 3.3).
- The number of people able to give a detailed description of ET 2020 processes amongst interviewees was small. Even within the European Commission, knowledge of ET 2020 was limited beyond DG EAC (JC 3.2, 3.3).
- Whilst descriptions of the different components of ET 2020 exist, there is no overarching description of how the different elements work together. Nor is there a diagrammatic representation of ET 2020 (the one presented in this report is the first time, to the evaluators' knowledge, that this has been attempted) (JC 3.2).

## Recommendations:

On this basis, three recommendations are made:

A 'Participant Guide to ET 2020' should be produced and made available which describes the different elements of ET 2020 processes, the roles and responsibilities of different bodies and their inter-relationships. It should also elucidate the relationship between ET 2020, Europe 2020 and the European Semester (see Conclusion 3).

The visibility of ET 2020 should be improved through the introduction of a communication action plan to ensure that:

- Outputs, such as reports, tools, and peer review reports, are easily accessible to the wider public both through the europa website (see next point) and through the use of effective and innovative dissemination methods such as the use of social media, with a timetable of actions based on key events, e.g. related to CSRs, Presidency events etc. Working Groups should seek to engage wider stakeholders through the use of web-based communication platforms.
- The DGEAC website home page headlines ET 2020, and is organised so that a (non-specialist) visitor is able to understand: what ET 2020 is about; what it does; who it involves (including a visual 'map' of the ET 2020 landscape including a 'food chain' for example to show how the activities build from the OMC level into Council conclusions and recommendations); who it benefits; what outputs are generated (and available coherently on the website); and what the impacts are (including success stories) being achieved at Member State and European levels.
- Member States should improve their capacity to interact effectively with ET 2020 by implementing the proposals put forward to the High Level Group in the spring of 2014 to coordinate the work of their national representatives in the various bodies of ET 2020. The above guide should detail (through good practice examples) how Member States can maximise their internal coordination and ensure that ET 2020 outputs flow effectively around their national stakeholders (see also Conclusion 8).

## Conclusion 7 – Modernisation and excellence

While ET 2020 embraces the needs of all Member States, there is naturally a tendency for the focus to be strongest on issues and Member States where there is the greatest need for modernisation. That said, even countries which are generally regarded as having the most highly developed systems overall have evident development needs. ET 2020 should more clearly express the diversity that exists and ensure that ET 2020 has a focus on excellence as well as modernisation, on exceeding targets and not just achieving them.

This conclusion is based on the following evidence:

- Member States with the greatest need for reform are more likely to demonstrate the most marked benefits from participation in ET 2020. This is not simply because they require policy development, but also because such countries may also be deficient in respect of national research capacity (JC 4.4).
- Countries with well-developed education and training systems report that they are often in the position of 'donors' rather than 'receivers' of new ways of thinking to deal with their challenges. However, even countries with advanced systems report positive benefits where they are able to work with countries with similar problems, such as through peer learning activities (JC 3.5).



## Recommendations:

On this basis two recommendations are made:

ET 2020 processes should ensure that they focus on excellence as much as on enabling the modernisation of education and training systems. The clustering of countries, as happens through peer learning activities and CSR's, should be developed further to enable all countries to benefit from ET 2020 and so that countries with well-developed systems can continue to learn from one another.

A central database of national good practices should be created to stimulate a focus on excellence. The database under the Mutual Learning Programme of DG Employment could be used as a model.

## Conclusion 8 – Effectiveness and added value

The effectiveness of ET 2020 in delivering change in Member States depends on a balance of factors, those intrinsic to ET 2020 and those internal to Member States. However, a lack of impact in Member States is likely to be due less to the effectiveness of ET 2020 processes and outputs and more to weaknesses in the take-up of ideas within Member States themselves. A key added value of ET 2020 has been its success in stimulating transnational dialogue across Member State borders on a scale not possible without the existence of a European framework. This led stakeholders to highlight the 'acceleration' of learning as a key added value of ET 2020.

This conclusion is based on the following evidence:

- In general ET 2020 processes and outputs are rated highly by participants. For example, in the e-survey elements such as coherence in the agenda and frequency of meetings received more than 90% good and very good ratings. Further, 73% of respondents said they made practical use of materials at national level to make reforms. Two thirds of Steering Group respondents indicated a moderate to strong effect of meeting outcomes on the alignment of policy in their own national or institutional context (JC 4.2).
- In contrast, there is a clear progressive diminution in the ability of outputs to influence people and feed into policy beyond the individuals themselves who take part in ET 2020. Over three quarters of respondents to the e-survey said they use materials for themselves "very much", but this falls to over one half for their colleagues and around two fifths for policymakers in their country. Only one in 3 respondents reported always disseminating outputs "back home"; one in 10 never disseminated (JC 4.2).
- Barriers to implementation were experienced by around two thirds of Working Group respondents. 66% of these identified lack of resources as a barrier, but level of interest of potential receivers (30%) and support within the organisation (23%) were also identified (JC 4.1).
- Although national political will is an important factor in determining the influence of ET 2020, some countries are much more highly organised to discuss and disseminate the outputs of ET 2020 than others. Dissemination routes range from simply forwarding deliverables via email to formal interdepartmental meetings and conferences. Spain has put in place a system of coordination that brings together national government and the representatives of the 17 regional governments to share the results of ET 2020 (JC 4.2).
- ET 2020 was seen to help stimulate both an increased volume and scale of learning which would have been difficult to achieve in the absence of the framework. This is mainly because ET 2020 was seen as the only real place where transnational learning took place. Although learning within Member States tended to occur, the volume and scale of activities and outputs generated through ET 2020 was significant which meant stakeholders were exposed to much more good practice, tools, events, handbooks and so on compared to what they would have done without the existence of ET 2020.



## Recommendation:

On this basis the following two recommendations are made:

- Good practice in respect of how Member States organise themselves to make the best use of ET 2020 outputs should be collected and disseminated, such as the model from Spain. Peer learning activities should be organised on this topic to enable countries to benefit from the experiences of others. This should take into account differences between countries in terms of their internal government structures, especially between regionalised and centralised countries.
- The European Commission should devise and implement support measures beyond the current OMC processes which Member States can draw upon to help them put into action lessons emerging from ET 2020 activities. This would go beyond the recommendations in Conclusion 6 which deal with improving dissemination. Measures could include development of networking and opportunities to experiment or pilot new and innovative approaches, country-specific action plans, and capacity-building support. Resources in current funding programmes should be made available for these purposes.

## Conclusion 9 – Peer learning activities

Participants' opinions on ET 2020 processes and outputs are generally very positive, with a clear set of critical success factors identifiable. Peer learning activities are especially valued and this is because they meet a broad set of needs. However, a systematic approach to peer learning has not yet been put in place.

This conclusion is based on the following evidence:

- Analysis of the processes (meetings, events etc.) of ET 2020 has identified the following critical success factors: opening up opportunities to learn from one another in an open and sometimes informal way; focusing on actions not words; getting the right balance of strategic actors and practitioners in the audience; and, ensuring that meetings and events are used to kick-start activities and are not an end in themselves (JC 3.6).
- Analysis of outputs (reports, data, peer learning activity outcomes etc.) of ET 2020 has identified the following critical success factors: providing Member States with highly useful information which can easily be turned into practical action focused on specific problems; ensuring that learning comes from the experiences of other Member States tackling the same issues; and ensuring the deliverables do not 'sit on shelves' (JC 4.2).
- Lack of energy, motivation and drive was identified as an important obstacle in the effective operation of many of the bodies involved in ET 2020 (JC 3.6).
- Whilst all the aspects of ET 2020 processes and outcomes tend to be valued by participants, peer learning activity was mentioned by multiple interviewees as generating practical outcomes that were of direct use in respect of changing policy and practice (JC 3.5).
- The annual Peer Reviews that have taken place in the context of the Directors-General groupings are regarded as a beneficial development by bringing together people with relevant expertise in a format that encourages open and productive debate with sufficient time to explore key issues. They have produced outputs of value to individual Member States as well as of a more general nature to feed into the EMCO-led multi-lateral surveillance of CSRs (JC 4.1).
- Analysis of the key features of peer learning activities show that they meet all the factors critical for delivering effective outputs (JC 3.5).

### Recommendation:

On this basis the following two recommendations are made:

- A more systematic approach should be adopted to peer learning using good practice examples from elsewhere, such as the DG Employment Mutual Learning Programme<sup>106</sup>. This Programme identifies different types of activities that can be used for different purposes with clear links to policy objectives and work plans. It is a highly transparent mechanism which facilitate cross-fertilisation between mutual learning activities, the systematic dissemination of results, and ownership at the political level.
- A wide range of peer learning activities should be used. Some parts of ET 2020 now have extensive experience in using peer learning activities, such as the Working Group dealing with higher education, and this could be a valuable source of expertise upon which other WGs could draw.

<sup>106</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1047>

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